

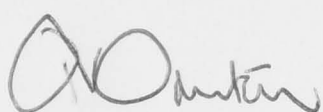
THE GROWTH OF THE INDIAN NAVY

What Is India Up To?

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of the requirements for the degree of Master
of Arts at the Strategic and Defence Studies
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I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institute of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the thesis.



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GLOSSARY/ACRONYMNS

AAM	air-to-air missile
AAW	anti-air warfare
AD	air defence
AEW	airborne early warning
ASM	anti-to-surface missile
ASUW	anti-surface warfare
ASW	anti-submarine warfare
DWT	dead weight tonnage
EEZ	exclusive economic zone
GDP	gross domestic product
GNP	gross national product
GRT	gross registered tonnes
IAF	Indian Air Force
INAA	Indian Navy Air Arm
INS	Indian Navy Ship
IOZOP	Indian Ocean Zone Of Peace
LCU	landing craft utility
LSL	logistic landing ship
LSM	landing ship medium
PLA	Peoples' Liberation Army (China)
SAM	surface-to-air missile
SLOC	sea line of communication
SSBN	nuclear-fuelled ballistic-missile submarine
SSM	surface-to-surface missile
UNCLOS	United Nations Law of the Sea

INDIAN NAVY SHIP CLASSES

<u>Class</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Origin</u>
RAJPUT	destroyer	ex-Soviet KASHIN
GODIVARI	frigate	Indian
NILGIRI	"	ex-British LEANDER
KAMORTA	"	ex-Soviet PETYA
TALWAR	"	ex-British WHITBY
KHUKRI	"	Indian
BEAS	"	ex-British LEOPARD
KISTNA	"	ex-British BLACK SWAN
VIJAY DURG	corvette	ex-Soviet NANUCHKA
VEER	"	ex-Soviet TARANTUL
VIDYUT	fast attack craft	ex-Soviet OSA
GHORPAD	landing ship (medium)	ex-Polish POLNOCNY
PONDICHERRY	minesweeper (ocean)	ex-Soviet NATYA
MAHE	minesweeper (inshore)	ex-Soviet YEVGENYA
KURSURA	submarine	ex-Soviet FOXTROT
SINDHUGKOSH	"	ex-Soviet KILO
SHISHUMAR	"	ex-FRG 209 Type 1500

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CHAPTER 1 - WHAT IS INDIA UP TO?

An Emerging Concern

During the 1970s and early 1980s, one of the most debated strategic concerns in Australia was the growing Soviet influence - and perceived maritime build-up - in the Indian Ocean and Southwest Pacific region. Today, those fears have abated as the threat of increased Soviet influence and presence has largely failed to materialise and, anyway, has been muted by the emerging *detente* between East and West. But, particularly in the 1980s, a new concern has emerged - the sustained but steady growth of the Indian navy, and its implications for the region.

It is indicative to note that in 1978, the total number of articles on the maritime build-up of the Soviet Union and India featured in the *Asian Defence Journal*, *International Defense Review*, *United States Naval Institute Proceedings*, and *Pacific Defence Reporter* totalled six and two respectively. In 1988, the figures were eight and nine respectively.

These trends have also been reflected in seminars and studies conducted by Australian academic institutions. ANU's Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, for example, has published three working papers on the Soviet maritime build-up, compared to five on India, since 1975. In Western Australia, the Curtin University of Technology established the Centre for Indian Ocean Regional Studies (CIORS) in 1986 and conducted a seminar titled 'Australia and the Indian Ocean' in March 1988. CIORS also planned to conduct another titled 'Indian Ocean Navies' in

September 1989.

At the official level, the concerns of the Australian government have been reflected in reports produced by Parliamentary Committees on Defence and Foreign Affairs. In 1976, a committee examined the growing influence within the region of the Soviet Union; in 1989, a Senate committee examined relations between Australia and India. It is also significant to note that when Prime Minister Hawke visited India in February 1989, one of the key issues on his agenda was to seek an explanation for India's naval expansion. 1

Indian Explanations

As Hawke found out, and as numerous other politicians and diplomats have found out before him, India's explanations vary considerably, usually depending on who is asking the question. Hawke, for example, was assured by then Prime Minister Gandhi that the explanation lay in the need to protect India's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) from outside exploitation. 2 Hawke was reportedly given confidential examples of recent infringements of India's EEZ, and came away from his meeting saying that he was now not concerned about the Indian naval build-up. 3

Yet during a recent visit to Australia, the respected Indian academic Dr Ram Subramanian assured audiences that the real reason related to the threat posed by China. 4 On other

1 See editorial in *The Australian*, 10/2/89, p. 10.

2 See Rajiv Gandhi quoted in *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11/2/89, p. 19.

3 Quoted in *Western Australian*, 11-12/2/89, p. 8.

4 View expressed during discussions with defence officials in Canberra in May 1989.

occasions, Indian officials have inferred that India's maritime growth relates only to the threat posed by its South Asian neighbours, or to deter the Americans from interfering in sub-regional affairs.

Each of these explanations has some degree of credibility. No single explanation, though, seems able to provide sufficient justification for India's program of maritime expansion. More likely is that the explanation lies in a combination of economic, diplomatic, security, national and strategic factors, as well as India's overall geo-political circumstances. The difficulty is that because Indian politicians and officials frequently still use a single, threat-related explanation, India appears uncertain of its own strategic direction. The region undoubtedly will watch with interest whether the newly-elected government of V.P. Singh is able, or willing, to better explain India's motives.

Interpreting India's Motives

Certainly one of the central problems in assessing India's maritime expansion is that most Western observers lack any real understanding of Indian strategic thinking - exacerbated by the fact that India itself does not appear to have any clearly articulated or agreed strategic purpose to its program of naval expansion. 5

Many of the threats identified by Indian officials and commentators lack specificity or are clearly exaggerated, at least

in Western eyes. Vague threat perceptions obviously make it difficult, in any defence force, to define the force structure needed to combat them. Perhaps more worrying is that open-ended, worst-case scenarios, even if only intended to justify capability requirements to a domestic audience, often unsettle neighbouring states and can result in an escalation of the very threat they are supposed to mitigate.

Certainly the nature and scope of India's actual acquisition program seems to suggest that it is not directed towards any specific operational objective. Indeed, most commentators are careful not to suggest that the Indian naval build-up constitutes a threat.⁶ Others argue that Western observers are drawing alarmist conclusions from what should be seen simply as "a process of normal ... modernisation".⁷ The accusation is also made that Western observers have grown used to "a global naval map dominated by a Western monopoly", and thus see something sinister in a third world country expanding into 'the natural order'.⁸

The Reality

A number of states within the Indian Ocean littoral,

6 See D. Warner, 'Jane's startling look at Moscow and New Delhi' in *Asia-Pacific Defence Reporter*, July 1990, p. 37.

7 See, for example, K. Booth and W.L. Dowdy, 'Structure and Strategy in Indian Ocean Naval Developments' in W.L. Dowdy and R.B. Trood (eds.), *The Indian Ocean: Perspectives on a Strategic Arena*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1985, p. 97.

8 Booth and Dowdy, *The Indian Ocean*, p. 97. Indeed, Australian commentators are criticised for worrying about the growth of Indian capabilities, while "see[ing] nothing wrong with their own forward posture": M. Joshi, 'Indian Defence and Australia', *The Hindu*, 17/6/89.

however, are concerned by India's maritime growth. 9 After his recent visit to Indonesia, the Australian Vice-Chief of the Defence Force commented that "Indonesia is particularly concerned" and noted that, according to the Indonesians, "the Indians have not been able to explain it to the rest of us". 10 South-east Asian mainland countries have been less public in their comments. Nevertheless, Singapore's Goh Chok Tong, then First Deputy Prime Minister, told a political meeting in February 1990 that India was the obvious candidate to fill any power vacuum should the United States reduce its presence and influence in South-east Asia. 11 His comments were reiterated shortly afterwards by Brigadier General Lee. 12

The basis of the concerns of some regional countries becomes apparent when regional naval strengths are tabulated, as shown at Table 1.1 (overleaf).

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- 9 See, for example, M.C. Dunn and J.A. Ackerman, *Beyond the Great Game: The India-Pakistan Balance and US Interests*, Special Report No. 1, 1989 Series, *The International Estimate*, 1989, pp. 6 and 8.
- 10 Vice Admiral Beaumont, quoted in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 8 March 1990.
- 11 Goh Chok Tong, quoted in *The Economist*, 3 March 1990, p. 26.
- 12 Brigadier General Lee, quoted in *The Sunday Times* (Singapore), 11 March 1990, p. 1.

Table 1.1. Comparison of Indian Ocean regional naval strengths

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
Manpower (K)	52	300	16	14	8	7.5	7.5	12	43	16	124
Submarines	17	115	6	0	0	3	0	0	2	6	17
Carriers	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Destroyers	5	19	8	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	14
Frigates	24	34	10	5	8	0	3	4	15	9	54
Corvettes	5	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Missile craft	27	235	8	10	13	9	4	8	4	0	56
Mine warfare craft	20	128	3	3	4	9	0	5	2	5	31
Amphibious vessels	10	76	0	7	12	0	0	2	15	1	37
Anti-submarine aircraft	49	12	9	10	20	14	0	6	9	5	73
Maritime reconnaissance aircraft	8	12	3	5	0	0	0	0	15	20	43

Index:

A	-	India
B	-	China
C	-	Pakistan
D	-	Iran
E	-	Saudi Arabia
F	-	South Africa
G	-	Bangladesh
H	-	Malaysia
I	-	Indonesia
J	-	Australia
K	-	Total (less India and China)

Sources: *Military Balance 1988/89*, International Institute of Strategic Studies, London, 1988, pp. 161-2; *Pacific Defence Reporter*, Annual Reference Edition 1988/89, XV, 6/7, December 1988/January 1989, pp. 151-2, 157, 169, 172-4, 176-7, 179, 182-4; and *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 17 June 1988, p. 1223.

One obvious conclusion from this table is that, within the Indian Ocean littoral, India's maritime forces are quantitatively superior to any other state. Indeed, disregarding China, they are at least half of the remainder in total (compare column A with K). Still, some would argue that it is misleading to set ships off against each other numerically, or to seek explanations in tables. Admiral Kohli, for example, argues that it is more relevant to examine the threat posed by the military capability of a potential opponent and then assess 'counter-assets'. 13

Kohli's suggested methodology is obviously useful, and will be taken into account as this paper examines the range of possible explanations for India's maritime expansion.

Hypothesis

An emerging view is that India's maritime expansion relates not to a particular threat, nor to the protection of particular interests. Rather, it seems to relate to the perception that India is not a *status quo* power, and that New Delhi sees the development of a blue-water navy as a means of enhancing its prestige and facilitating its recognition as a regional power and global actor. 14

13 S.N. Kohli, *Sea Power and the Indian Ocean*, McGraw-Hill, New, Delhi, 1978, p. 111.

14 This view was expounded by M. McKinley in his paper 'From Dante to Shannon', presented at the 'Australia and the Indian Ocean Seminar', organised by the Centre for Indian Ocean Regional Studies (CIORS), Curtin University of Technology, Perth in March 1988. Note that a blue-water navy in this paper refers to the capability to project a viable naval task force, operating well beyond mainland support.

The 'great-power' view has sufficient credibility to be taken seriously, particularly given that no single cause seems able to explain India's force structure. The perplexing issue is why Gandhi, and figures such as Subramanian and Professor K. Subrahmanyam, frequently still use a single, threat-related explanation in seeking to rationalise India's current and planned strategic capabilities. criticism?

In part, it is probably because India is reluctant to antagonise its neighbours by specifically identifying them as real or potential threats. ¹⁵ Another possible reason, though, is that India seems not to have developed clearly-articulated strategic objectives; it has no equivalent of Australia's white papers on defence; and there is practically no attempt made to debate the issues in parliament or public forums. It may be for these reasons that some Indians have difficulty in explaining convincingly the purpose of their country's maritime expansion.

India would perhaps be well advised to review its threat perceptions, and then develop strategic objectives and policy which realistically enhanced its national security. The demise of Gandhi's Congress (I) party at the recent elections would seem to provide the new government of V.P. Singh with a timely opportunity for such re-assessment. Provided it were done in such a way as to involve parliamentary debate and public discussion, India should be able to develop a defence force structure which is sustainable and which could be rationalised, both domestically and to the region.

15

The counter-point is that India would probably never acknowledge that Pakistan or Bangladesh, in particular, could ever pose a serious threat to India's sovereignty.

Approach

Most discussions on the subject of India's maritime expansion spend some time tracing the development of the navy from the time of independence. There appears little to be gained by the exercise, apart from highlighting the fact that much of India's naval growth has occurred since about the mid 1970s, as illustrated at Table 1.2.

Table 1.2. Quantitative growth of the Indian navy since the mid 1970s

	1978	1983	1988
Manpower (K)	46	47	52
Submarines	8	8	17
Carriers	1	1	2
Destroyers	-	2	5
Frigates	25	21	24
Corvettes	3	3	5
Missile craft	16	16	27
Amphibious vessels	7	10	10
Anti- submarine aircraft	20	31	49
Maritime reconnaissance aircraft	8	8	8

Sources: *Military Balance 1978/79*, International Institute of Strategic Studies, London, 1978, p. 61; *Military Balance 1983/84*, pp. 90-1; and *Military Balance 1988/89*, pp. 161-2.

A more useful approach - expanded in Chapter 2

'Building a Predominant Navy' - seems to be to identify current assets and capabilities, and then highlight likely expansion between now and the end of the century. The chapter concludes that the Indian navy already possesses the full range of traditional naval capabilities and, with a projected fleet strength of some 185 ships and submarines by the late 1990s, India will continue to be superior to any other regional power or any foreseeable combination of regional navies.

Chapter 3 'Is India's Sovereignty Under Threat?'

examines whether there is any link between India's maritime growth and its professed concerns about the threats posed by Pakistan, China, the superpowers, or the 'extended' strategic environment. It concludes that while Pakistan and China are certainly traditional adversaries of India, the nexus between India's naval build-up and the threat - or even the potential threat - they pose to India is not as clearly defined as some in New Delhi would make out.

Moreover, the threat of Chinese maritime expansion into the Indian Ocean seems exaggerated. At best, China may acquire a blue-water navy by about 2010. Even then, it cannot be assumed that India and the Indian Ocean would necessarily be the focus of China's attention. Nor does there seem to be any significant threat to India's sovereignty posed by the superpowers, a muslim conspiracy, or any other combination of states within the regional environment. India's claim of being surrounded on all sides by potential aggressors seems to relate more to the justification of a capability, rather than a realistic threat perception.

Chapter 4 'Are Indian Interests Under Threat?' examines possible threats to India's offshore interests. The interests include marine and seabed resources in India's EEZ and the remainder of the Indian Ocean, India's interest in Antarctica, India's sea lines of communication (SLOCs), India's 'overseas' population in other Indian Ocean littoral states, and India's interest in ensuring the political stability of the small island states in the Southwest Indian Ocean region.

It concludes that none of these interests, *per se*, seems to justify the current or projected force structure of the Indian navy. A number of the interests can be protected with less capable assets - such as EEZ resources by the Indian Coast Guard. Others - such as seabed mining leases and Indian interests in Antarctica - would probably need only a fraction of India's naval assets for their reasonable protection.

In other cases - such as the protection of SLOCs - it is difficult to identify any potential aggressor who could pose a serious threat to India's seaborne commerce. It is also argued that to project influence over the Indian diaspora, India needs only a suitable combination of its existing surface and amphibious forces, rather than carrier-based naval task forces, or the capability for opposed amphibious operations.

Chapter 5 'What About Institutionalised Momentum?' examines the proposition, occasionally put by Rajiv Gandhi when he was Prime Minister, that naval expansion is the result of inertia - a combination of historical, political, bureaucratic, technological and budgetary factors - quite beyond the control

of any political leader. Although there is some truth in the proposition, the inertia factor should not be exaggerated. Gandhi, for example, may once have been able to use the political inertia factor as a legitimate excuse, but he was in power long enough to have altered at least the direction of policy, if he had wished.

Defence spending also seems to be at odds with India's capacity to pay. Maritime expansion, therefore, cannot easily be explained away as the process of modernisation, within naval budgetary processes. Nor can India's navy build-up be seen simply as the consequence of indigenous production capabilities. It also seems spurious to suggest - as it sometimes has been - that navy ships are being built only to provide employment in shipyards, or to ensure the continuity of technological expertise. These factors certainly contribute towards India's maritime expansion, but their importance should not be over-stated.

Chapter 6 'Is It Simply That India Wants More Status?' examines the proposition that India aspires now to similar great power status, and to be given its 'rightful' place in world affairs. It concludes that the historical analogy is based on historical inaccuracies and, anyway, is hardly a credible rationale to offer as justification for India's maritime expansion. It also examines India's proponency of the Indian Zone of Peace, and Indian moves towards the acquisition of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. The issue seems to be not whether India is deserving of more status, but that it has yet to rationalise its aspirations.

Chapter 7 'Outlook' examines the perception that India seems to be trying to promote its image through military power, and then discusses the implications for regional stability. It notes that India's reliance on military power under Rajiv Gandhi has alienated its neighbours and encouraged the very arms race that India presumably wants to avoid. The prospects for change under the National Front government of V.P. Singh are also addressed.

The paper concludes on the theme that New Delhi has failed to explain - either to the region or to its own people - exactly what India is trying to achieve by its maritime expansion. Until India decides where it is going, and develops a coherent strategy - involving national consensus - the rest of the world will rightly remain wary of India's maritime expansion.

CHAPTER 2 - BUILDING A PREDOMINANT NAVY

India's Maritime Forces

India now has the sixth largest navy in the world, with some 52,000 personnel and 135 ships. Its fleet comprises two aircraft carriers, five destroyers, 24 frigates, 17 submarines (including one nuclear-powered Soviet CHARLIE-class), 50 minor surface combatants and specialist vessels (such as mine-warfare), 19 amphibious ships and craft, and 18 support vessels. 1 Naval air assets include one squadron of SEA HARRIERS, six helicopter squadrons and two squadrons of maritime reconnaissance aircraft. 2

Aside from the carriers, India's main surface combatants are mostly multi-role capable ships, with a mix of British and Soviet-style weaponry, rather than the specialised platforms common to Western navies. Nevertheless, India still possesses the full range of traditional naval capabilities, including anti-surface warfare, anti-submarine warfare, anti-air warfare, mine warfare, amphibious warfare, surveillance and naval air support.

Anti-surface Warfare (ASUW)

The ASUW capability in the Indian navy is provided primarily by the SEA EAGLE air-to-surface missiles (ASM) of the

1 *Military Balance 1988/89*, International Institute of Strategic Studies, London, 1988, pp. 161-2. Note that these figures do not include the Indian Coastguard, which has only limited in-shore capabilities and is excluded from further discussion.

2 *Military Balance 1988/89*, pp. 161-2.

carrier-borne SEA HARRIERS; by variants of the SS-N-2 (STYX) missile system fitted to a range of ships; by surface-launched torpedoes and various medium-calibre gun systems fitted to a range of ships; and by submarine-launched torpedoes (see Table 2.1).

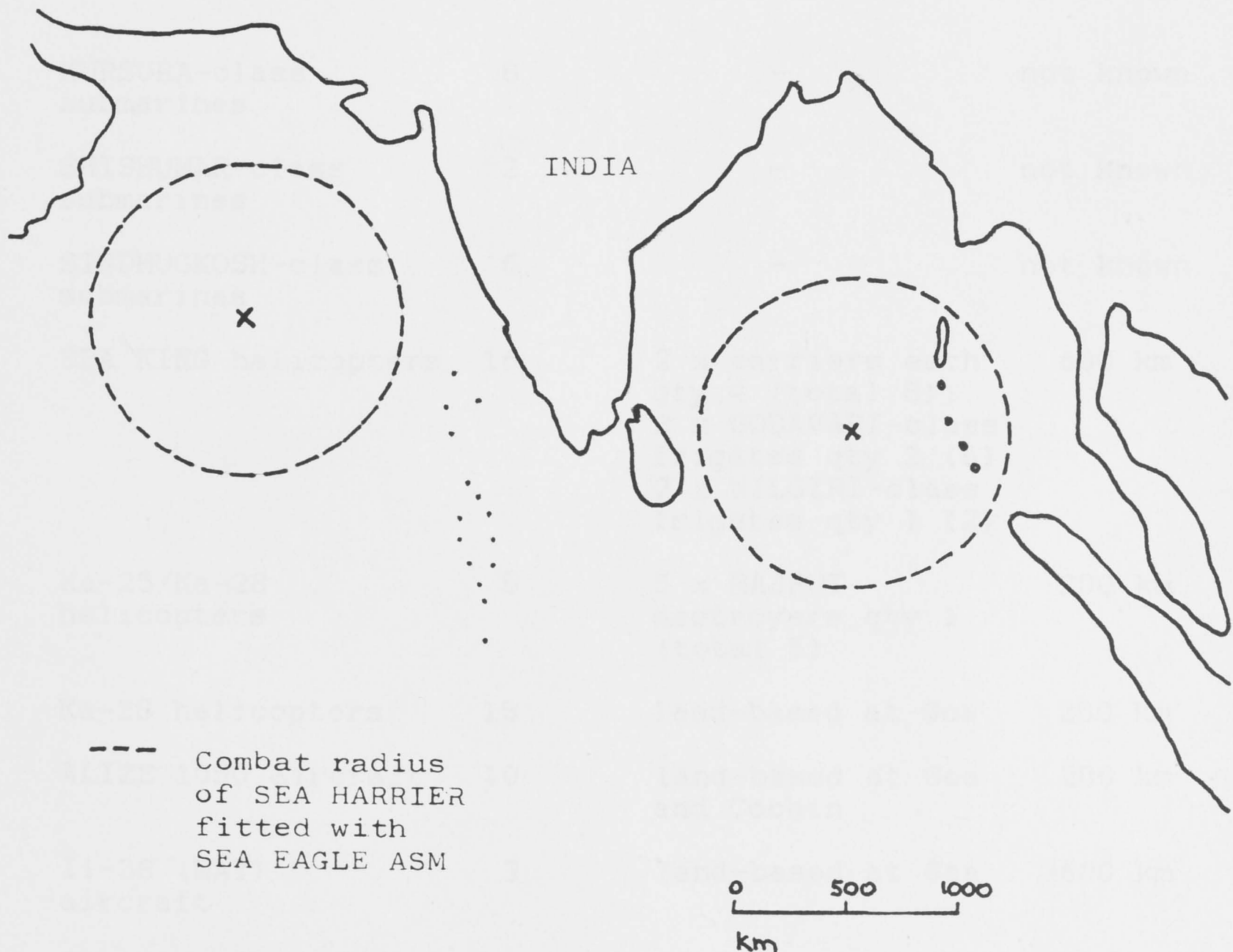
Table 2.1. Distribution and combat range of ASUW weapon systems

<u>Weapon System</u>	<u>Fitted To</u>	<u>Combat Range</u> (weapon system)
SEA EAGLE ASM	carrier-borne SEA HARRIER aircraft, and SEA KING helicopters operating from carriers, RAJPUT-class destroyers and GODAVARI and NILGIRI-class frigates	110 km
SS-N-2 (STYX) SSM	RAJPUT-class destroyers; GODAVARI, TALWAR and KHUKRI-class frigates; VILJAY DURG and VEER-class corvettes; and VIDYUT-class fast attack craft	80 km SS-N-2C 40 km SS-N-2A/2B
surface-launched anti-ship torpedoes	RAJPUT-class destroyers and GODAVARI, NILGIRI and KAMORTA-class frigates	< 20 km
submarine-launched anti-ship torpedoes	SINDHUGKOSH, SHISHUMAR and KURSURA-class submarines	< 20 km
113 mm guns	NILGIRI-class frigates	22 km
76 mm guns	RAJPUT-class destroyers and KAMORTA-class frigates	15 km

Sources: *Pacific Defence Reporter*, Annual Reference Edition 1988/89, XV, 6/7, December 1988/January 1989, p. 178 and *Jane's Weapon Systems 1988/89*, Jane's Publishing Company, London, 1988, pp. 446, 500, 503 and 720.

A schematic illustration of India's ASUW capability coverage, provided by a nominal two-carrier task force - each comprising one carrier, two destroyers, six frigates and two submarines - is shown at Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1. Schematic illustration of India's ASUW capability coverage



Sources: *Jane's All the World's Aircraft 1984/85*, Jane's Publishing, London, 1984, pp. 225, 230 and 258; and *Jane's Weapon Systems 1984/85*, Jane's Publishing, London, 1984, pp. 75 and 175.

Anti-submarine Warfare (ASW)

The Indian navy has a wide range of ASW-capable units. These include its submarine fleet; SEA KING and Ka-25/Ka-28 helicopters operating from the carriers, the destroyers and GODAVARI and NILGIRI-class frigates; and land-based ALIZE 1050, Il-38 (MAY) and Tu-142M (BEAR F) ASW aircraft. 3 The quantity and distribution of these assets is shown at Table 2.2.

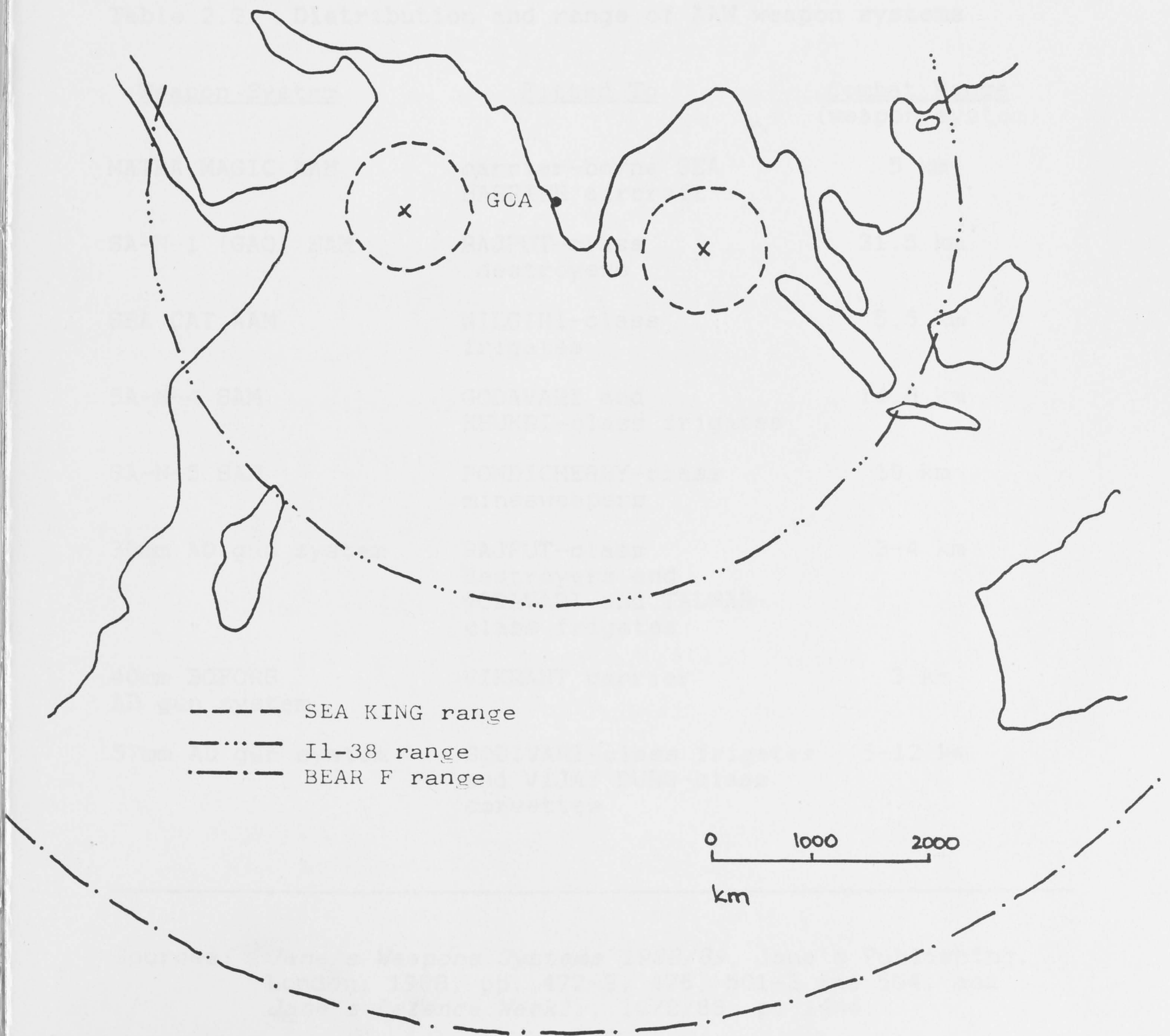
Table 2.2. Indian navy ASW assets

<u>Asset</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Allocated To</u>	<u>Combat Radius</u>
KURSURA-class submarines	8	-	not known
SHISHUMAR-class submarines	2	-	not known
SINDHUGKOSH-class submarines	6	-	not known
SEA KING helicopters	16	2 x carriers each qty 4 (total 8); 3 x GODAVARI-class frigates qty 2 (6); 2 x NILGIRI-class frigates qty 1 (2)	600 km
Ka-25/Ka-28 helicopters	5	5 x RAJPUT destroyers qty 1 (total 5)	200 km
Ka-28 helicopters	18	land-based at Goa	200 km
ALIZE 1050 aircraft	10	land-based at Goa and Cochin	200 km
Il-38 (MAY) aircraft	3	land-based at Goa	3600 km
Tu-142M (BEAR F) aircraft	8	land-based at Goa	8300 km

Sources: *Military Balance 1988/89*, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1988, pp. 161-2 and *Jane's All the World's Aircraft 1984/85*, Jane's Publishing, London, 1984, pp. 224, 225, 230 and 258.

In combination, these units provide the Indian navy with a reasonable (by Western standards) ASW capability to detect, locate and neutralise conventional submarines operating within the region. A schematic illustration of India's ASW capability coverage, provided by a two-carrier task force and supported by land-based ASW aircraft, is shown at Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2. Schematic illustration of India's ASW capability coverage



Anti-air Warfare (AAW)

The AAW capability of the navy is provided primarily by carrier-borne SEA HARRIER aircraft, equipped with MATRA MAGIC air-to-air missiles (AAM) and cannon, and the SA-N-1 (GOA) surface-to-air missile (SAM) system fitted to RAJPUT-class destroyers. Point air defence systems are fitted to most ships in the fleet - the distribution and range of these weapon systems is shown at Table 2.3.

Table 2.3. Distribution and range of AAW weapon systems

<u>Weapon System</u>	<u>Fitted To</u>	<u>Combat Range</u> (weapon system)
MATRA MAGIC AAM	carrier-borne SEA HARRIER aircraft	5 km
SA-N-1 (GOA) SAM	RAJPUT-class destroyers	31.5 km
SEA CAT AAM	NILGIRI-class frigates	5.5 km
SA-N-4 SAM	GODAVARI and KHUKRI-class frigates	14.8 km
SA-N-5 SAM	PONDICHERRY-class minesweepers	10 km
30mm AD gun system	RAJPUT-class destroyers and GODAVARI and TALWAR-class frigates	3-4 km
40mm BOFORS AD gun system	VIKRANT carrier	3 km
57mm AD gun system	GODIVARI-class frigates and VIJAY DURG-class corvettes	5-12 km

Sources: *Jane's Weapons Systems 1988/89*, Jane's Publishing, London, 1988, pp. 472-3, 476, 501-3 and 504, and *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 10/2/88, p. 1444.

These systems provide the Indian navy with a reasonable expectation of success against conventional air attack and attack by STYX-type ASM or SSM systems.

Mine Warfare

India has 12 PONDICHERRY-class ocean minesweepers and six MAHE-class inshore minesweepers. 3 These vessels provide an adequate minesweeping capability against moored contact mines, but have minimal capability to detect or counter magnetic or acoustic mines. 4 The navy can deploy mines from a variety of platforms, including RAJPUT-class destroyers, KAMORTA-class frigates, KURSURA-class submarines and Il-38 (MAY) aircraft.

Amphibious Warfare

India's amphibious capability is provided by one 5500-tonne logistic landing ship (LSL), nine GHORPAD-class landing ships medium (LSM) and nine landing craft utility (LCU). 5 This force provides an amphibious lift capability of about 3000 troops and 75 armoured vehicles. 6

Maritime Surveillance

India's maritime surveillance capability is provided primarily by the land-based Il-38 (MAY) and Tu-142M (BEAR F) reconnaissance aircraft. Their respective combat radii are 3600

3 *Military Balance 1988/89*, pp. 161-2 and *International Defense Review*, 4/89, p. 521.

4 *Jane's Fighting Ships 1985/86*, Jane's Publishing Company, London, 1986, pp. 238-9 and 567.

5 *Military Balance 1988/89*, pp. 161-2.

6 *Jane's Fighting Ships 1985/86*, pp. 238 and 572.

and 8300 kilometres, enabling coverage over most of the Indian Ocean and, especially, the choke points into the region (see Figure 2.2). Ship-borne maritime surveillance can also be provided - as a secondary role - by the carrier-borne SEA HARRIERS, and SEA KING helicopters (see Table 2.2).

Offensive Naval Air Support

The Indian Navy Air Arm (INAA) is an integral part of the navy, providing maritime strike, ASW and maritime surveillance capabilities. Its order of battle is shown at Table 2.4. (overleaf).

Land-based

Tu-142 (SEAL P) aircraft

IL-38 (NSP) aircraft

SEVENTEEN 325 aircraft

HALCUB Maritime Defender aircraft

ALIZES 1030 aircraft

KAHOV Ka-25/26 helicopters

CHETAK (Aloette 117) helicopters

Note that the Indian Air Force (IAF) also contributes one squadron of JAGUAR fighter bombers and two squadrons of MiG-21 (FISHED) aircraft to the INAA.

Source: Military Balance 1992/93, pp. 151-2, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000.

Table 2.4. Indian Navy Air Arm order of battle *

<u>Aircraft</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Role</u>
<u>Ship-borne</u>		
SEA HARRIER aircraft	11	strike/air defence/ reconnaissance
SEA KING helicopters	16	ASW
"	6	AEW/commando assault
KAMOV Ka-25/28 helicopters	5	ASW
CHATAK (Alouette III) helicopters	3	ASW/utility
<u>Land-based</u>		
Tu-142M (BEAR F) aircraft	5	long range maritime surveillance/ASW
Il-38 (MAY) aircraft	3	"
DORNIER 228 aircraft	26	coastal surveillance/ EEZ protection
PILATUS Maritime Defender aircraft	18	coastal and short- range reconnaissance
ALIZE 1050 aircraft	10	ASW/search and rescue /reconnaissance
KAMOV Ka-25/28 helicopters	18	ASW
CHATAK (Alouette III) helicopters	8	ASW/utility

* Note that the Indian Air Force (IAF) also subordinates one squadron of JAGUAR fighter bombers and two squadrons of MIG-21 (FISHBED) aircraft to the INAA.

Sources: *Military Balance 1988/89*, pp. 161-2, and
Jane's Defence Weekly, 30/7/88, p. 152.

Shortcomings

The Indian navy has a number of serious shortcomings.⁷ Much of its equipment is obsolete. Its logistic system is generally poor, outdated and unable to sustain deployments at sea over any distance or duration. The diversity of ships, weapons and sensors complicates operating procedures, training, maintenance and logistic support - and necessitates continuing dependence on foreign suppliers.

The lack of an adequate airborne early warning (AEW) capability and gaps in India's AAW defences also mean that the fleet is vulnerable to modern missiles, such as EXOCET and HARPOON.⁸ India's amphibious capabilities - especially in situations requiring an opposed landing, or over any distance - are limited. In general, training standards are low, owing to a combination of outdated tactics and doctrine, inadequate sea time, and a failure to exercise regularly with other major navies.

The significance of these shortcomings, however, should not be exaggerated. Many of them are not significantly worse than those experienced by other navies, including a number in more industrialised countries. Certain of these short-comings would limit the effectiveness of the Indian navy against another major power, but they are less important in the context of regional conflict. In support of operations in the Maldives and Sri Lanka, for example, the Indian navy performed creditably.

7 Judgments about shortcomings in the Indian navy are derived from discussions over many years with serving and retired naval officers from a number of countries.

8 India has reportedly signed a joint venture project with British Aerospace for initial R & D on an AEW system: *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 26/11/88, p. 1372.

Future Acquisitions

The Indian navy has an active modernisation program to replace or upgrade obsolete equipment. Two additional Soviet KILO-class submarines, for example, have been delivered in 1989, bringing the total of SINDHUGKOSH-class holdings to six. Two additional SHISHUMAR-class submarines (FRG Type 1500) are also under construction at the Mazagon Dockyard (and expected to be completed in the early 1990s). India is reported to have decided against further SHISHUMAR-class submarines, but may well consider in lieu the indigenous production or acquisition of additional SINDHUGKOSH-class vessels in the early 1990s. 9

India is also in the process of replacing its eight KAMORTA-class (Soviet PETYA-class) frigates with indigenously-constructed KHUKRI-class light frigates. Two KHUKRI-class ships were launched at Mazagon in 1987/88, and an additional two at Calcutta in late 1988. 10 The navy also intends to replace its VIDYUT-class (Soviet OSA-class) missile craft with VEER-class (Soviet TARANTUL-class) corvettes. India has already acquired two VEER-class vessels from the Soviet Union, reportedly has another two or three on order, and has commenced indigenous construction at Goa of the first of a reported eight or ten additional corvettes. 11

9 Some reports suggest that two additional Soviet KILO-class submarines are to be delivered to India in August 1989: *Pacific Defence Reporter*, May 1989, p. 45.

10 See *International Defense Review*, 12/88, p. 1673 and *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 10/9/88, p. 533.

11 *Jane's Fighting Ships 1988/89*, Jane's Publishing, London, 1988, p. 140.

Press reports also claim that India has signed an initial agreement with France for assistance in the indigenous construction of an aircraft carrier, to be completed by the late 1990s. 12 The design would probably be based on the French CHARLES DE GAULLE-class - about 35,000 tonnes - be possibly nuclear-powered, and probably built at the Cochin shipyards. Even though India has expressed an interest in a three-carrier navy, it seems more likely that this carrier would only be a replacement for the ageing INS VIKRANT.

There has also been speculation in the press and defence journals that India intends to indigenously produce a new class of destroyers, reportedly of about 5000 tonnes, under the codename 'Project 15'. 13 Construction was to have commenced in late 1987 at Mazagon but, to date, there have been no reports of progress.

Outlook

Based on the acquisition program made public, and a reasonable interpretation of lead-times, India's navy seems likely by the late 1990s to comprise at least 185 ships, with many of them state-of-the-art combatants. A projected ship strength, by class, is shown at Table 2.5 (overleaf).

12 See, for example, *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 11/2/89, p. 205 and 10/6/89, p. 1124. Some reports speculate that the total; program involves the construction of at least two, and possibly three, carriers: see *International Defense Review*, 3/89, p. 248.

13 *Pacific Defence Reporter*, Annual Reference Edition 1988/89, p. 89 and *Jane's Fighting Ships 1985/86*, p. 141.

Table 2.5. Projected ship strength of the Indian navy in the late 1990s *

	<u>1989</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
Submarines	17	22	+ 4 SINDHUGKOSH-class, 2 SHISHUMAR-class and 3 CHARLIE or VICTOR-class; - 4 KURSURA-class
Aircraft carriers	2	2	+ one CHARLES DE GAULLE class; but INS VIKRANT non-operational
Destroyers	5	7	+ 2 Project 15 class
Frigates	24	27	+ 6 KHUKRI-class; - 2 BEAS-class and one KRISTNA-class (non-operational)
Corvettes	5	13	+ 8 VEER-class
Minor surface combatants	27	31	+ 10 SDB Mk 3 fast attack craft; - 6 VIDYUT-class fast attack craft
Mine warfare vessels	18	24	+ 6 MAHE-class
Amphibious vessels	19	30	+ one LSL; + 4 GORPHAD-class LSM and + 6 LCU
Support vessels	18	29	significant increases in at-sea logistic support
Totals	135	185	

* Note that these figures do not include the Indian Coastguard.

The significance of an Indian navy with some 185 ships and submarines by the late 1990s is that India's strategic position in the Indian Ocean region will be further strengthened. Both in quantitative and qualitative terms, India's maritime forces will continue to be superior to any other regional power and, indeed, superior to any foreseeable combination of regional navies. India's neighbours may well ask why India needs a navy of 185 ships and submarines.

The sub-continents' maritime periphery is little to suggest that the growth of the Indian navy has been related directly to the threat posed by India's traditional adversaries.

Post-1947 arguments for naval expansion were advanced on three grounds - geostrategic importance as a regional power, protection of sea-borne trade and offshore resources, and the need for balanced growth between the three services.¹ These reasons expressly avoided the identification of, or allusion to, any immediate or clearly identified threat. Indeed, the strongest argument by domestic critics against maritime expansion has been the lack of any viable naval threat.

1. A. G. C. Thomas, *The Defence of India: A Budgetary Perspective of Strategy and Politics* (Madras: New Delhi, 1978), p. 106.

2. See Thomas, *Defence of India*, p. 106 and A. G. C. Thomas, *Indian Security Policy* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 157.

CHAPTER 3 - IS INDIA'S SOVEREIGNTY UNDER THREAT?

Maritime Rationale

India's overall strategic preoccupation is the security of its land borders with Pakistan and China. It is these borders that successive invaders frequently crossed in their conquest of the sub-continent. Somewhat paradoxically, there is little to suggest that the growth of the modern Indian navy has been related directly to the threat posed by either of India's traditional adversaries. 1

Post-1965 arguments for naval expansion were advanced on three grounds - geostrategic importance as a regional power, protection of seaborne trade and offshore resources, and the need for balanced growth between the three services. 2 These reasons expressly avoided the identification of, or linkage to, any immediate or clearly identified threat. Indeed, the strongest argument by domestic critics against maritime expansion has been the lack of any visible naval threat.

1 R.G.C. Thomas, *The Defence of India: A Budgetary Perspective of Strategy and Politics*, Macmillan, New Delhi, 1978, p. 236.

2 See Thomas, *Defence of India*, p. 208 and R.G.C. Thomas, *Indian Security Policy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1986, p. 153.

The Threat From Pakistan

Nevertheless, Indian officials and commentators often use the 'threat' posed by Pakistan as the basis and explanation for India's maritime expansion. Certainly the relationship between Pakistan and India has been characterised by longstanding disputes - the most intractable over the status of Kashmir. It is Pakistan, alone within the region, which has the determination and potential capability to challenge India's position as the dominant power in South Asia. 3

If Pakistan decided to attack India, geography dictates that it would be primarily a land and air battle along their common border. Yet even if Pakistan concentrated most of its forces in the east, it could at best only match the number of troops India could readily deploy to the border area. 4 With its superior air power and strategic resources, India should be able to repel a Pakistani attack.

Moreover, Pakistan's lack of territorial depth means that most of its population and industry and all of its defence facilities are within reach of India's air force. Pakistan's leaders would presumably be restrained by the appreciation that a failed attack could provide India with the opportunity to launch a counter-offensive across the border into Pakistan.

3 See B. Cloughley, 'Regional superpower flexes its muscles', *Pacific Defence Reporter*, February 1989, p. 43.

4 Pakistan's army has 450,000 troops (19 divisions), compared to India's 1.2 million and 34 divisions. And in the east, Bangladesh's army comprises only 90,000 troops and 5 infantry divisions: *Pacific Defence Reporter*, Annual Reference Edition 1988/89, XV, 6/7, December 1988/January 1989, pp. 177-8.

Naval operations, from the Pakistani perspective anyway, would be peripheral to the land battle. Pakistan could attempt to destroy elements of the Indian navy by surprise attack, or could conduct raids against shore-based facilities. Isolated raids could be conducted almost anywhere on the Indian coastline, but limitations imposed by operating range and the need to maintain surprise would probably limit such attacks to within about 600 kilometres of Pakistan waters; that is, no further south than about Bombay. The forces needed by India to counter the type of naval actions suggested by this scenario are considerably less substantial than envisaged by India's maritime build-up.

The more likely scenario seems to be conflict between India and Pakistan where India is the aggressor. India's national pride is offended by Islamabad's persistent refusal to acknowledge Indian hegemony, and by the perception that Pakistan actively encourages and supports dissent within India. 6 Indeed, many Indians consider the very existence of Pakistan to be an affront to India. Certainly a real fear within Pakistan is that "a revanchist India conspires to achieve if not Pakistan's dismemberment, at least its disablement". 7

5 Jane's opines that "[the Indian navy] could flatten the Pakistan navy in very short order": *Jane's Fighting Ships* 1985/86, Jane's Publishing Company, London, 1985, p. 14. But cf. "India ... has only marginal superiority over Pakistan's navy" in R.N. Misra, *Indian Ocean and India's Security*, Mittal, Delhi, 1986, p. 219.

6 Cloughley claims, though, that "there is not a shred of evidence that the government of Pakistan in any way supports the Sikhs": Cloughley, *Pacific Defence Reporter*, p. 44.

7 R.G. Wirsing, 'Pakistan's Security Predicament' in W.L. Dowdy and R.B. Trood (eds.), *The Indian Ocean: Perspectives on a Strategic Arena*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1985, p. 317.

Even within this scenario, though, it is questionable whether India needs a powerful navy, structured as it is to provide the full range of traditional capabilities. India would probably want to impose a blockade around Pakistan to prevent resupply or reinforcement by sea. Imposing a Falklands-type blockade, policed by submarines alone, would be more difficult in the congested waters of the Arabian Sea than it was for the British in the South Atlantic, but keeping the Pakistani fleet bottled up in its base - and even imposing an economic blockade - does not require 135 or 185 ships and submarines.

The Threat From China

At least Pakistan is a known quantity to India and a manageable albeit, at times, difficult neighbour. China is a different proposition. India's humiliating defeat by China in 1962 is still an emotive issue for New Delhi. It is China that India sees as its main rival for Asian hegemony. Moreover, it is China that India sees as the greater long-term threat, particularly since the improvement in Sino-Soviet relations has enabled Beijing to redirect some military emphasis away from its northern and western borders. The improvement in Sino-Soviet relations also militates against the prospect that the Soviet Union would side with India in any future Sino-Indian conflict.

India is also envious of China's nuclear status, and probably resents Beijing's permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council.

Until recently, the sources of tension between India and China were confined to disputes over land borders, and the issue of Tibet. Increasingly, though, India has been voicing concerns at the prospects of Sino-Pakistan collusion, and the perceived interest by China in the Indian Ocean and its littoral.⁸

India has watched with concern the construction of the Karakoram highway, linking China to Karachi and the waters of the Indian Ocean.⁹ Chinese assistance to Burma, Bangladesh and Thailand is also seen by India as a ploy to gain access to the Bay of Bengal, so that China then "can envelop India in a 'pincer movement'".¹⁰

Probably of more concern to India is what it sees as the emerging threat posed by China's navy. India cites the Chinese occupation of islands in the Spratlys in the South China Sea as evidence of Chinese irredentism.¹¹ Indian officials also view the visits by Chinese navy ships to Karachi, Trincomalee and Chittagong in 1987 as further evidence of Beijing's burgeoning power projection capabilities.¹² During discussions with defence officials in Canberra in May 1989, Subramanian claimed that Chinese SSBNs are already operating in the Indian Ocean.

8 In his paper 'Strategic Developments in the Indian and South Pacific Ocean Regions' presented at the CIORS seminar in Perth in March 1988, Professor Subrahmanyam surmised that Pakistan may plan to offer a home port to Chinese nuclear missile submarines.

9 See, for example, Misra, *Indian Ocean*, p. 170.

10 Misra, *Indian Ocean*, p. 128.

11 See S. Dutta, 'China and the Security of India', *Strategic Analysis* (New Delhi), XII, 2, May 1988, pp. 139-40 and 142.

12 Dutta, *Strategic Analysis*, pp. 139-40 and Professor K. Subrahmanyam quoted in *The Australian*, 31/3/88, p. 6.

China's increasing interest in the South China Sea, however, does not necessarily mean a change to China's overall strategic orientation. China's enduring strategic reality is its long and vulnerable border with the Soviet Union; the improvement in Sino-Soviet relations, however, is enabling China to devote more attention and resources to its secondary areas of strategic interest, which include Vietnam and India.

China's ongoing competition with Vietnam over the Spratlys - an island chain located some 800 kilometres from the Chinese mainland - has provoked Southeast Asian fears of an irredentist Beijing. 13 And recent media speculation about an aircraft carrier for China, linked to its capability requirements to operate in the South China Sea, would have heightened New Delhi's fear of a Chinese blue-water navy. 14

Certainly the PLA may demand and get a larger share of budgetary resources as a result of its key role in the reimposition of control in Beijing in June (even though modernisation of the PLA remains China's fourth priority). The winner, though, will probably be the army, rather than the air force and navy which played no part.

It seems unlikely for the present, therefore, that the navy will get the additional funds needed to acquire even a

13 See Tai Ming Cheung, 'Command of the seas' and 'Force projection' in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 27 July 1989, pp. 16-9 and S. Bilveer, 'Southeast Asia: New balance, new powers' in *Asian Defence Journal*, 11/89, p. 10.

14 See, for example, Tai Ming Cheung's articles in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 27 July 1989, pp. 16-20.

single aircraft carrier. 15 The more likely scenario is that the navy will continue to improve its capabilities to operate in regional waters and in the South China Sea. In lieu of an aircraft carrier, the navy will probably devote research and funding to an air-to-air refuelling capability, to give its fighter aircraft the capability to operate over the Spratlys from the mainland (or Hainan Island).

In the longer term, China undoubtedly will work towards a blue-water navy. A decision to acquire aircraft carriers could be made within the next five years. If and when China makes the decision to acquire the capability, it would reasonably then take another 10-15 years just to acquire the ships, and another five years or so to develop the capability to operate them as a viable naval task force. 16

On this basis, it seems unlikely that China could develop a blue-water navy, capable of operating in (with organic air support, and not just visiting) the Indian Ocean, before at least 2010. Even then, it should not necessarily be assumed that India and the Indian Ocean will be the focus of China's interest. The important point also is that any naval force attempting to enter the Indian Ocean would first have to transit one of the narrow straits of the Indonesian archipelago.

15 During discussion at the 'Australia and the Indian Ocean' seminar in Perth in March 1988, Professor Subrahmanyam claimed that China is likely to acquire up to eight aircraft carriers.

16 Admiral H. Hardisty CINCPAC noted in February 1989 that "a long term Chinese threat doesn't make a lot of sense, at least ... not in this century.": quoted during an interview in *Pacific Defence Reporter*, February 1989, p. 42.

To prevent Chinese ingress during hostilities, India would seem to need only a suitable combination of submarines, surface ships and aircraft positioned at these points, rather than a two or three carrier surface battle group.

In summary, India is quite right to be worried about Chinese 'adventurism' in the South China Sea, and the possibility that China will one day attempt to project its influence into the Indian Ocean. At this stage, though, Indian concerns as to the threat to India's sovereignty posed by China's maritime expansion are almost certainly premature. More importantly, it does not seem that the current or planned force structure of the Indian navy relates directly to the threat that even a Chinese blue-water navy may pose next century.

The Influence Of The Superpowers

India also has humiliating memories of the American 7th Fleet task force - headed by USS ENTERPRISE - entering the Bay of Bengal in 1971, effectively in support of Pakistan. Indeed, some Indian commentators claim that the subsequent objective of India's maritime expansion has been to contend with the threats "perceived to arise from the ingress of superpower navies into the Indian Ocean". 17

Indian 'hawks' frequently assert that the United States has plans for a joint US/Pakistan base at Gwadar in Pakistan, that

17 See O. Marwah, 'India's Strategic Perspectives on the Indian Ocean' in Dowdy and Trood, *The Indian Ocean*, p. 315 and J.P. Anand, 'India's Island and Other Ocean Territories: Strategic Environment', *Strategic Analysis* (New Delhi), XII, 2, May 1988, p. 183.

naval facilities on the Baluchistan coast are being upgraded for US use, and that the United States is seeking additional facilities in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. 18 The inference is that collusion between the United States and Pakistan is increasing the threat to India.

In reality, superpower naval interests in the Indian Ocean do not centre on India. 19 The subcontinent is a secondary sphere of superpower contention and is declining in importance in the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq war and the withdrawal of the Soviets from Afghanistan. The US presence in the Indian Ocean aims to preserve US ability to project power in defence of its own and Western interests in the Gulf, to protect the vital sea lines of communication across the Indian Ocean, and to provide security assistance for and through Pakistan, largely because of Afghanistan.

The Soviet Union's strategic interests in the Indian Ocean relate primarily to the sea lanes between Europe and the Soviet Far East, and to the containment of China on its southern flank. The Soviet Union also has a competitive interest in countering American influence in the region.

In the coming decade, superpower influence and interest in the region is likely to decline even further. The Soviet Union is still India's major source of arms - this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 - but the emerging Sino-Soviet

18 See, for example, Misra, *Indian Ocean*, p. 130, and Marwah, *The Indian Ocean*, p. 311.

19 See A.J. Tellis, 'Banking on Deterrence', *US Naval Institute Proceedings*, March 1988, p. 151.

rapprochement has diminished the strategic importance of India to the Soviet Union. For its part, the United States will probably scale down the level of its military support to Pakistan, and decrease its physical presence in the Indian Ocean. 20 The United States will probably continue to maintain its base at Diego Garcia - much to India's annoyance - but the US military presence relates principally to interests in the Persian Gulf, rather than South Asia. This view is shared by a number of Indian commentators, who dismiss any suggestion that either superpower, and especially the United States, would intervene directly against India, or that Pakistan provides the springboard for superpower intervention into the region. 21

Still, the notion seems to persist in some quarters in India that a powerful navy will at least raise the cost of superpower intervention in the region. 22 This argument appears akin to closing the stable door after the horse has bolted. India did not have the navy in the 1970s to prevent superpower influence in the region; it could have the navy in the 1990s, but there may be no superpowers (in the region) left to deter.

20 During her recent visit to Washington, Prime Minister Bhutto obtained assurances of continuing US military assistance. This probably related, though, more to US willingness to support Bhutto's hold on democracy, rather than support to Pakistan in its rivalry against India. Recent press reports also indicate that the United States intends to reduce its naval force in the Indian Ocean later this year: see Reuters press release 29/6/89 'US to reduce navy presence in Indian Ocean this year'.

21 See, for example, Misra, *Indian Ocean*, p. 175.

22 For example, Subrahmanyam, quoted in M.C. Dunn and J.A. Ackerman, 'Beyond the Great Game: The India-Pakistan Balance and US Interests', Special Report No. 1, 1989 Series, *The International Estimate*, 1989, p. 9.

The Extended Strategic Environment

India has not forgotten, though, that Indonesia was prepared to help Pakistan in the war of 1965 - allegedly providing patrol boats and aircraft, as well as offering to seize the Andaman and Nicobar Islands as a diversionary move. 23 During the 1971 war, Saudi Arabia also allegedly provided naval hardware to Pakistan. 24

More recently, India has become concerned that the build-up of arms in the Middle East, the Persian Gulf and Southeast Asia will facilitate, in times of tension, the ready transfer of weapons to Pakistan. In particular, the lessons of the Iran-Iraq war suggest to India that Muslim countries in the Middle East would be prepared to finance and equip Pakistan in any future war with India. 25

There are no indications, though, that any country in the region is arming itself in anticipation of an eventual war with India, nor even close military collaboration with Pakistan. Indeed, and as evidenced by the Iran-Iraq war, there is considerable factionalism within the Arab world. Apart from Iran, most states have few links with South Asia, and even less with India.

In the unlikely event of war between Pakistan and India,

23 See Misra, *Indian Ocean*, p. 127 and Thomas, *Indian Security Policy*, pp. 152-3.

24 See S.N. Kohli, *Sea Power and the Indian Ocean*, McGraw-Hill, New Delhi, 1978, p. 135

25 Thomas, *Indian Security Policy*, p. 40.

Pakistan would, in all likelihood, receive substantial assistance from the Middle East. It would, though, probably be in the form of financial aid, logistic support and the 'loan' of some major weapon systems. This should not be construed as a 'muslim conspiracy' against India.

In search of a threat, Indian officials and commentators have often cast even further afield. Admiral Kohli, for example, has warned that "the possibility of naval collaboration between Australia and South Africa cannot be discounted".²⁶ The danger in such pronouncements - coming from a former Chief of the Indian Naval Staff - is that such speculation can be construed by others to represent a credible threat to India's sovereignty.

India is quite right to be wary of possible threats to its sovereignty, particularly given its wars and clashes with Pakistan and China since Independence. Even accepting, however, that India needs to be looking ahead to the next century, it is difficult to perceive of potential threats to its sovereignty that will need a navy of the structure and size that India is planning. If New Delhi perceives that such threats do indeed exist, then it should identify them. Until it does, other states will remain suspicious of India's motives.

CHAPTER 4 - ARE INDIAN INTERESTS UNDER THREAT?

India's Exclusive Economic Zone

As a result of agreements reached at the United Nations Third Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS III) in 1983, India was able to legitimise its claim to an EEZ in excess of two million square kilometres - equal to nearly two thirds of its land mass and the twelfth largest in the world. 1 The EEZ consists not only of a zone extending 200 nautical miles from the mainland and around all India's offshore territories, but also a claim under the continental shelf principle, extending some 800 kilometres into the Bay of Bengal. 2 The approximate boundaries of the EEZ are shown at Figure 4.1 (overleaf).

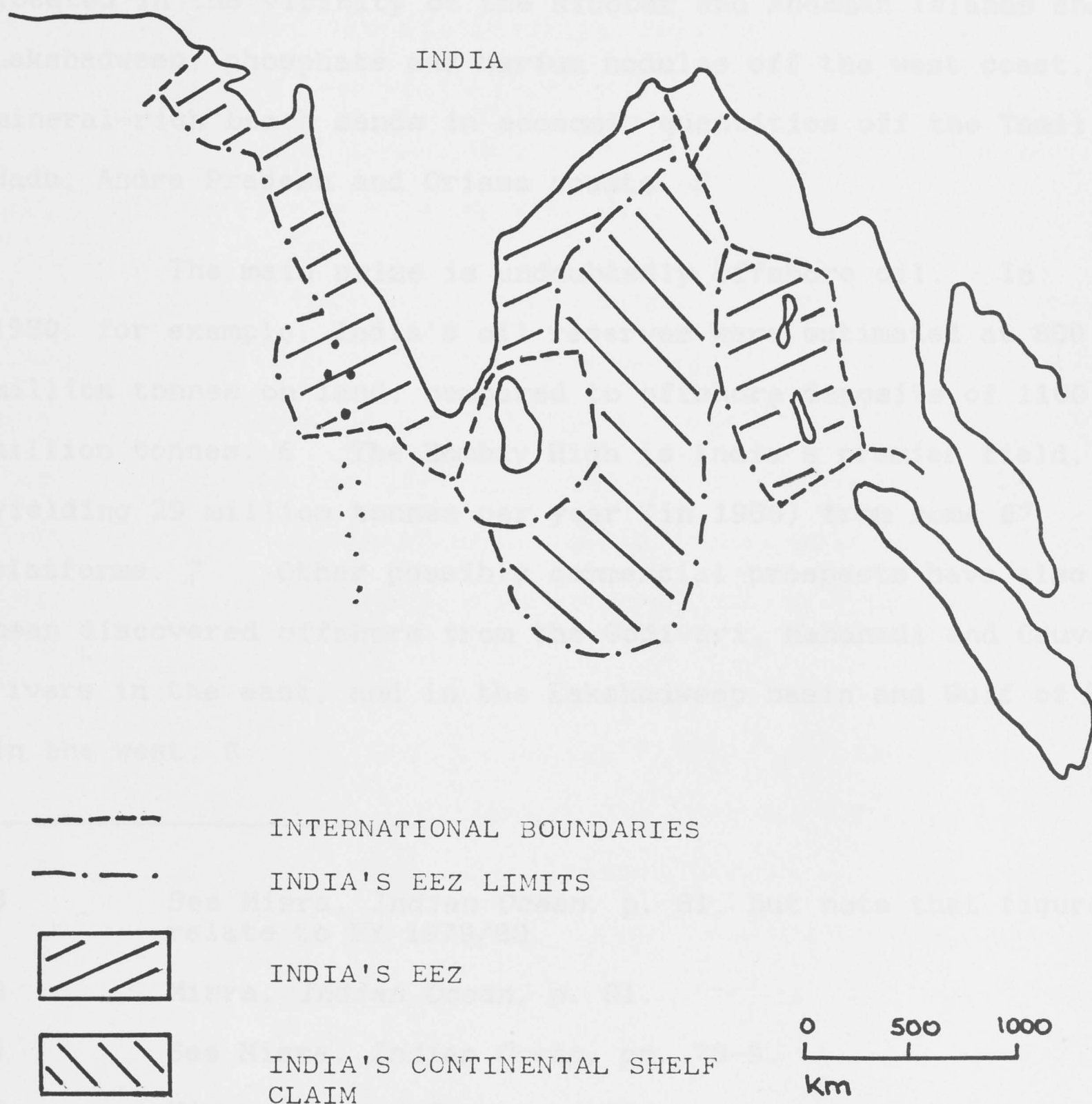
India's interest in the EEZ relates both to defence considerations and to the potential exploitation of marine resources. By imposing a virtual *cordon sanitaire* - stretching from the Nicobar and Andaman Islands in the east to the Laccadives in the west - India is able to exercise a degree of control over the strategic approaches to the mainland. India can, for example, legitimately monitor the activities of foreign ships -

1 Under The Territorial Waters, Continental Shelf, Exclusive Economic Zone and other Maritime Zones Act of 1976, India had already laid claim to a 12 mile territorial waters zone, a 24 mile contiguous zone and a 200 nautical mile EEZ.

2 At UNCLOS III, India unsuccessfully argued that its EEZ should be based on the archipelagic principle - taking into account its 1200 offshore islands - as had been applied to Indonesia and the Philippines: see R.N. Misra, *Indian Ocean and India's Security*, Mittal, New Delhi, 1986, pp. 103-4.

and especially foreign warships - within India's EEZ.

Figure 4.1. The extent and approximate boundaries of India's EEZ



India also has some 35,000 fishing craft and 350 deep sea trawlers operating in the EEZ, with catches totalling over 1.5 million tonnes per year. 3 About five per cent of the yield is exported, representing some four per cent of India's total exports. 4 Offshore mineral deposits are also in the process of being exploited - calcareous deposits, for example, have been located in the vicinity of the Nicobar and Andaman Islands and Lakshadweep, phosphate and barium nodules off the west coast, and mineral-rich beach sands in economic quantities off the Tamil Nadu, Andra Pradesh and Orissa coasts. 5

The main prize is undoubtedly offshore oil. In 1980, for example, India's oil reserves were estimated at 800 million tonnes on land, compared to offshore deposits of 1100 million tonnes. 6 The Bombay High is India's premier field, yielding 29 million tonnes per year (in 1986) from some 67 platforms. 7 Other possibly commercial prospects have also been discovered offshore from the Godivari, Mahanadi and Cauvery rivers in the east, and in the Lakshadweep basin and Gulf of Kutch in the west. 8

3 See Misra, *Indian Ocean*, p. 81, but note that figures relate to FY 1979/80.

4 Misra, *Indian Ocean*, p. 81.

5 See Misra, *Indian Ocean*, pp. 78-9.

6 Misra, *Indian Ocean*, p. 80.

7 J.P. Anand, 'India's Island and Other Ocean Territories: Strategic Environment', *Strategic Analysis* (New Delhi), XII, 2, May 1988, p. 171. But India still needs to import over 30 per cent of its domestic requirements.

8 See Misra, *Indian Ocean*, p. 80.

UNCLOS III did more than legitimise India's EEZ claims; it also raised the level of consciousness within the region regarding the maritime environment. More states than ever are now aware of and ready to exploit its resources. 9 India, for example, felt it necessary to send gunboats into the Bay of Bengal in 1981 to support its dispute with Bangladesh over New Moore Island - ownership of which involved a potential EEZ of some 4000 square miles. India also has yet to agree maritime boundaries with Pakistan in the Gujarat-Sind region. 10

It is apparent that the potential for maritime demarcation disputes exists, as does the potential for disputes over fishing access and the exploitation of seabed resources. Indeed, when Gandhi cited recent violations of the EEZ to Hawke in February 1989, his confidential examples may well have related to infringements by Japanese or Taiwanese fishing vessels. 11

India's Coast Guard, though, was formed in 1978 in response to the very need to police fishing infringements, smuggling, piracy and low-level incursions of the EEZ. 12 Although its capabilities are limited, the Coast Guard should be able to protect offshore installations from harassment, and even intercede in low-level demarcation disputes. The Indian navy

9 K. Booth and W.L. Dowdy, 'Structure and Strategy in Indian Ocean Naval Developments', in K. Booth and W.L. Dowdy (eds.), *The Indian Ocean: Perspectives on a Strategic Arena*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1985, p. 96.

10 See Misra, *Indian Ocean*, p. 106.

11 Rajiv Gandhi on the alleged violations quoted in *Western Australian*, 11-12/2/89, p. 8.

12 Current strength of the Coast Guard is 2500 personnel, with one KUTHAR-class frigate, 29 patrol craft and three squadrons of aircraft: *Pacific Defence Reporter*, Annual Reference Edition, XV, 6/7, Dec 1988/Jan 1989, p. 179.

may be required to assist the Coast Guard but, in terms of capability requirements, there does not seem to be an essential role for the navy in the protection of India's EEZ.

Seabed Mining

At UNCLOS III, India was one of the five countries granted 'pioneer investor' status by the United Nations Preparatory Commission for the Sea Bed Authority. India, the United States, France, Japan and the Soviet Union were empowered to conduct separate feasibility studies on the commercial prospects of mining the resources of the seabed, within a 150,000 square mile site to be selected by each participant. 13 India chose two contiguous sites in the central Indian Ocean, about 2000 kilometres south of India, and established a cooperative mechanism with Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, sponsored by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. 14

India appears convinced that the extraction of minerals from the seabed has long-term economic potential. Indian reports claim that one square mile of seabed may yield as much as 70,000 tons of minerals, including manganese, cadmium, iron ore, bauxite, nickel, cobalt and copper. 15 The Indian research vessel GAVESHAMI, for example, has scooped manganese nodules off the seabed near Mauritius, with an estimated value of US\$100,000 per

13 The investors needed to spend US\$30 million on a seabed survey - and ten per cent on a specific site - to obtain production authorisation from the International Sea Bed Authority: Misra, *Indian Ocean*, pp. 104-5.

14 See Misra, *Indian Ocean*, pp. 104-5 and Anand, *Strategic Analysis*, p. 178.

15 See S.N. Kohli, *Sea Power and the Indian Ocean*, McGraw-Hill, New Delhi, 1978, p. 62.

square mile. 16

India's Department of Oceans Development and the National Institute of Oceanography have been engaged in mapping and prospecting likely operational areas but, to date, Indian activities have not progressed beyond survey and research, primarily because the costs are currently prohibitive. A requirement may exist, in the future, for the navy to protect India's seabed mining leases and facilities. It seems unlikely, however, that the task could ever be more than a secondary role for a portion of the Indian fleet.

Antarctica

India first established an unmanned scientific station in the Antarctic in February 1982. Its role was to study climatic, physical and biological properties in the region as they related to developments in the Indian Ocean. By 1985, India had established a permanent facility - Dakshin Gangotri - complete with a 3000 metre airstrip to enable direct flights to and from India. 17 India has recently been accepted as a member of the the Antarctic Treaty Parties Consultative Group, and has now established a second research station in the Antarctica.

It is difficult, though, to perceive of a situation which would necessitate Indian navy involvement in India's interests in the Antarctic. Should India be at war, it would

16 Kohli, *Sea Power*, p. 62. Other reports put the value at US\$10 million per square mile: P.K.S. Namboodiri et al, *Intervention in the Indian Ocean*, ABC Publishing, New Delhi, 1978, p. 62.

17 See O. Marwah, 'India's Strategic Perspectives on the Indian Ocean' in Dowdy and Trood, *The Indian Ocean*, p. 316.

probably be necessary to escort resupply vessels through the Indian Ocean. Even this, though, would require only a handful of ships, and does not seem to justify a specific force structure or role for the navy.

Sea Lines Of Communication (SLOCs)

India has crucial oil and trading links with countries of the Persian Gulf and Middle East (24.6 per cent of imports and 11.4 per cent of exports), and important trade routes through the Arabian Sea to Europe, via the Suez Canal. 18 India has less important trade routes through the Strait of Malacca to East Asia and the Americas, and insignificant trading links with other littoral states. India's volume of seaborne commerce has increased from 2.4 million gross registered tonnes (GRT) in 1971 to an estimated 8 million GRT in 1985. 19

Particularly in the last decade, Indian officials and commentators have become almost paranoid about Panikkar's assertion that "the economic life of India will be completely at the mercy of the power which controls the sea". 20 The protection of India's seaborne trade and sea lanes in general now figures prominently in the rationalisation of India's maritime build-up.

Shipping can certainly be interdicted in a variety of ways at any point between the point of departure and the

18 See Misra, *Indian Ocean*, pp. 65-6. The figures are percentages by volume for FY 79/80.

19 Misra, *Indian Ocean*, p. 59.

20 K.M. Panikkar, *India and the Indian Ocean*, 2nd Edition, Allen and Unwin, London, 1951, p. 14.

destination - air strikes on ports and harbours, the mining of harbours and their approaches, attacks at sea by submarines or surface vessels, the mining of choke-points, and attacking choke-points from the shore-line. 21 Yet for other than major powers, mid-ocean interception is a difficult task, principally because of the problem of target location and identification. For a campaign to be effective in economic terms, it must also be sustained over a protracted period.

For these reasons, it is difficult to identify any potential aggressor who could pose a serious threat to India's seaborne commerce. Pakistan does not have - nor does any other regional power - the capability for mid-ocean interdiction. It also seems inconceivable that any major power would try to block either the Suez Canal or the Strait of Malacca, simply to interdict Indian shipping. The protection of SLOCs is certainly an important element in India's maritime expansion, but the threat to India's shipping should not be exaggerated.

The Indian Diaspora

The other justification used by India for its expanding Indian Ocean interests is the welfare of overseas Indians. This has been used to provide a rationale for strengthening relations and influence with several Indian Ocean states - notably Mauritius and Seychelles - and it has figured prominently in the reasoning for India's intervention in Sri Lanka and the Maldives. 22

21 Judgments about SLOC warfare are derived from discussions with a number of serving and retired Australian naval officers.

22 Namboodiri, *Intervention in the Indian Ocean*, p. 234.

India asserts a 'natural right' to dominance of the conveniently named Indian Ocean, based on historical evidence of Indian commercial activities, and political and cultural influence in the region. 23 The region, though, does not have a common cultural or linguistic heritage. Nevertheless, the Indian communities that have settled throughout the region provide India with an opportunity for influence stemming from the notion of responsibility for the Indian diaspora. 24

India has also used gunboat diplomacy in the region to ensure the well-being of regimes favourable to Indian interests, to force less friendly regimes to take account of those interests, and to prevent instability. Given the small size of many Indian Ocean states, India could deploy and sustain sufficient forces to make a significant contribution to the ability of these states to cope with domestic or external threats. Some commentators see that this security role alone "amply justifies [India's] naval expansion". 25

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- 23 There is also the view that India is pursuing its own version of the Monroe Doctrine; that is, that external powers should not intervene in the problems of South Asian states, and that no South Asian state other than India should arbitrate in regional disputes and problems : See S. Bilveer, 'Operation Cactus: India's 'Prompt Action' in Maldives', *Asian Defence Journal*, 2/89, p.30.
- 24 Most Indian Ocean islands have small Indian settler communities, with the largest on Mauritius.
- 25 Misra, *Indian Ocean*, p. 140. Subrahmanyam claims that India has an obligation towards these island states: K. Subrahmanyam, 'Strategic Developments in the Indian and South Pacific Ocean Regions' in R.H. Bruce (ed.), *Australia and the Indian Ocean*, Centre for Indian Ocean Regional Studies, Perth, 1988, p. 90.

Yet even for this role - which would most likely involve sending troops to an island state to overthrow a mercenary-led coup attempt - India does not need carrier-based naval task forces, or the force structure needed for opposed amphibious operations. Rather, India needs the ability to project military power with some of the existing amphibious forces discussed at Chapter 2.

The only possible rationale for India to acquire the force structure needed for opposed amphibious operations seems to be to recover an island state or Indian offshore territory seized by a hostile power. It is almost inconceivable that a superpower would forcibly take over an island state or attempt, for example, to seize the Nicobar and Andaman Islands.²⁶ Other major powers could seize less well-defended territories more easily, but it is difficult to envisage a situation whereby any regional or other power would contemplate such action.

In summary, it is agreed that India has a range of offshore interests which need protection. It does not seem appropriate, though, for India to talk of its offshore interests in a collective sense, or to rationalise its maritime expansion solely in terms of these interests. A more realistic approach would be for India to identify plausible threats to its offshore interests, and then decide the forces needed to counter them. It seems unlikely that India would then be able to justify, on the basis of its offshore interests alone, the structure or size of the navy currently being developed.

26 Yet Indian defence commentators claim that a Falklands-type scenario haunts Indian military planners over the Nicobar and Andaman Islands: Marwah, *The Indian Ocean*, p. 303.

CHAPTER 5 - WHAT ABOUT INSTITUTIONALISED MOMENTUM?

Political And Bureaucratic Inertia

In the early days of his prime-ministership, Rajiv Gandhi could have used the excuse of political and bureaucratic inertia to explain India's burgeoning defence growth - that it was due to the almost irreversible processes set in place by his mother. While there would have been an element of truth in this explanation, it has arguably been Rajiv's own vision of India's technological advancement which has perpetuated and, indeed, accelerated institutionalised momentum.

Ultimately, defence capabilities are a function of economic development - especially in industry and technology - and political will. For three decades after Independence, India pursued an inward-looking industrial development strategy, in which import substitution, domestic-led growth, and the expansion of the agricultural sector were emphasised. In 1981-82, and in an attempt to regain economic momentum, Indira Gandhi introduced a program of structural adjustment, which enabled India to begin a major modernisation of its industrial base, supporting infrastructure and its armed forces.

Rajiv Gandhi accelerated this process. Under the Seventh Five-Year Plan (1985/86 - 1989/90), his government took steps to make Indian industry more competitive by facilitating the transfer of modern western technology. The government

gradually relaxed controls over exports, eased industrial procedures, reduced subsidies and provided incentives for foreign and domestic investment. Gandhi's vision of a more modern and technologically-advanced India was worthy, but he seemed unable - or unwilling - to expand it to address the problems of poverty and to appeal to the broad masses of the Indian people.

Indeed, Gandhi tended instead to pursue the broadly-defined 'elite' objectives of modernisation, military power and global status. Certainly a factor not generally appreciated in the West is that while India has 300 million or so people living in abject poverty, it also has an urban 'middle class' of some 40 to 50 million people.¹ It is this elite that largely influences Indian policy decisions.

But India's economic and technological progress does not have to be at the expense of the masses. Nor are the processes of change irreversible. In the final days of his prime-ministership, Gandhi was subjected to increasing criticism - even from within the elite - for his remoteness from the issues which most concerned the people, and for under-rating the old Congress ideologies of socialism and self-sacrifice.

Gandhi's loss was due not only to the charges of corruption which plagued his administration - it was also due to his failure to give a higher priority to stimulating broad-based growth, and his failure to distribute income and resources more

1 Some commentators put the figure as high as 100 million: see Defence Minister Beazley quoted by Sunanda K. Datta-Ray in *The New Statesman*, 5/3/89.

2 *Strategic Survey 1987/88*, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1988, p. 144.

equally. The important point is that the rationale of political and bureaucratic inertia to explain India's maritime expansion has some credibility when advanced by a newly-elected government, but it becomes more and more difficult to justify with the passing months of a government's term of office.

The Budget Process

Military expansion programs can also be sustained by budgetary processes. Defence forces usually commit themselves to manpower ceilings, capital expenditure and operating costs based on an expectation of funding within one or two percentage points of historical allocations. For reasons of inter-service rivalry, the individual services also tend to bid for major items of capital expenditure to a level at or above that of previous years.

The Indian defence force is no exception to these general budgetary strategies. 3 Over the three-year period to 1987/88, India's defence expenditure increased by 40 per cent in real terms, and in 1988 was 4.5 per cent of GDP and 18 per cent of central government expenditure. 4 Defence expenditure for the period FY86/87 to FY89/90 is shown at Table 5.1 (overleaf).

3 I gratefully acknowledge the assistance provided by a colleague, Mr Paul Gibbons, in interpreting the Indian defence budget. I have also relied heavily on his unpublished article 'India's Defence Budget Dilemma' of July 1989.

4 Figures derived from various issues of the *Indian Expenditure Budget* (Government of India, New Delhi).

Table 5.1. India's defence expenditure 1986/87 to 1989/90

(expressed in billions of rupees at current prices -
note that figures for 89/90 are forecasts)

	86/87*	87/88*	88/89*	89/90
Army	60.71	64.88	68.48	65.17
Navy	6.68	6.84	7.74	7.57
Air Force	20.94	16.56	17.80	17.99
Capital	12.27	31.07	37.27	39.07
Sub-total % of GDP	3.9	4.1	3.9	3.7
Defence total % of GDP	4.5	4.9	4.8	4.4

Note: * Defence expenditure has exceeded budget estimates by about 4 per cent in each of the past four years, except for 1987/88 when most government expenditure was cut to contain the adverse effects of a nation-wide drought.

Source: Government of India, *Indian Expenditure Budget*, New Delhi, issues 1986/87 to 1989/90.

The inter-service ratio for defence expenditure between the army, air force and navy has remained relatively stable over the years at 70:20:10. This conceals, though, a very real change in capital expenditure allocations, in which navy's share moved during the 1970s from 34 to 51 per cent. 5 It is also important

5 R.G.C. Thomas, *The Defence of India: A Budgetary Perspective of Strategy and Politics*, Macmillan, New Delhi, 1978, p. 201.

to note that navy has ranked first since 1974.

India's 1989/90 defence budget - approved in the parliament on 2 May 1989 - is about 1.5 per cent below actual defence expenditure for FY 88/89, representing a real reduction of about 6 per cent. In presenting these figures to parliament, then Finance Minister Chavan stressed that India's defence preparedness would not be impaired, that capital outlay would actually increase by 5 per cent and that more money had been allocated for the expansion of the naval fleet. 6

Nevertheless, the 89/90 budget figures seemed to reflect the genuine concern of the government of the day that the defence spending surge of the mid 1980s contributed to an unsustainable budget position, with high deficits and high interest payments on past deficits crowding out the capital expenditure necessary to sustain further growth. 7 To wind back the deficit, the new government will need to impose continuing defence spending restraint. Even though defence spending enjoys strong bipartisan support and was a key element in the election manifesto of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the government of V.P. Singh will have to face economic realities. 8

6 AFP press release 1/3/89 'India trims military spending for first time in 10 years'.

7 The budget deficit has risen to 8 per cent of GDP during Rajiv's term of office. And financing deficits has caused real interest payments to grow at almost 15 per cent per year during the 1980s, doubling as a percentage of GDP since 1980/81: *Indian Expenditure Budgets since 1980/81*.

8 Prime Minister Hawke, for example, noted on the eve of his February 1989 visit to New Delhi that "the greatest disaster in the huge defence outlays of India and Pakistan is the diversion of resources involved": *The Age*, 10/2/89, p. 10.

Under Gandhi, some restraint on defence spending was achieved by using up stocks of spares and not replacing military assets. 9 Some government payments to both domestic and foreign suppliers were deferred. The air force's advanced jet trainer project was postponed. 10 Expenditure on service salaries and pensions was also cut by some 9 per cent in the 1989/90 budget, but the three major naval ship-building projects currently underway were not affected. 11

It certainly seems, therefore, that defence spending at 1989 levels is not compatible with India's attempts to sustain general economic growth. Although no major naval equipment acquisitions have been abandoned or manpower reductions implemented, there is obviously tension between India's military aspirations and its capacity to pay.

Indigenous Production

Since Independence, successive Indian governments have reaffirmed the country's commitment to developing and expanding an indigenous production capability. Certainly one of the advantages of direct overseas purchases is the ability to procure quickly specific requirements in response to an emerging threat,

9 Both the navy and air force are reportedly discovering that they do not have the money to buy the weapon systems needed for their ships and aircraft: see S. Gupta and P.G. Thakurta, 'Heading for a Crisis', *India Today*, 2/2/89, p. 43.

10 Gupta and Thakurta, *India Today*, p. 43.

11 See 'Future Acquisitions' in Chapter 2.

rather than the several years it may take to produce the capability locally, even through licensed production. 12 In the longer term, though, the policy of overseas purchases has a number of disadvantages.

Access may be restricted, as it is presently to certain advanced-technology items from the West. The supplier may also practise 'spare parts diplomacy'. Overseas purchases are also a drain on foreign exchange deposits - as opposed to indigenous production which may accrue export revenue. Perhaps more importantly, overseas purchases militate against the development of wider indigenous capabilities. 13 This is particularly significant for India, which views the development of an indigenous arms industry as further evidence of its emergent status in world affairs.

Nevertheless, the costs to India of technological self-reliance have been enormous. The promotion of indigenous production has taken large infusions of investment capital that could have been used for other more socially useful projects, or could have provided a better financial return.

India also still lacks the technological expertise to develop the full array of highly-sophisticated equipment and weapons systems needed by a modern army, despite the fact that it rates third in the world in the number of students graduating each

12 R.G.C. Thomas, *Indian Security Policy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1986, p. 247.

13 These disadvantages are discussed in more detail in Thomas, *Indian Security Policy*, pp. 248-9.

year from universities. 14 Probably more galling for India is that it has yet to establish itself as an arms exporter, while China is being particularly successful in the international arms arena. 15

It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that most of India's major weapons platforms have been supplied from overseas - the majority from the Soviet Union. 16 Soviet military products are generally less expensive than those of the West, thereby saving hard currency, and their quality has gradually approached that of Western equipment. The Soviet Union has also readily allowed the co-production of equipment in India. Even though the Indo-Soviet relationship remains strong - notwithstanding the improved Sino-Soviet relationship - India is clearly reluctant to depend exclusively on the Soviet Union and has purchased major platforms and weapons systems from other suppliers in the East and West. 17

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- 14 India frequently favours, therefore, the approach of limited overseas purchase, followed by collaboration in joint or licensed production in India. It has, however, been able to develop a nuclear capability and has an embryonic space program, with an emphasis on satellite communications and remote sensing.
- 15 India is rated only 38th in the world in terms of arms exports. But, in part, this is because until quite recently, Indian defence industries were not permitted to export defence technology. Arms sales in 1988 earnt \$US45 million: *Pacific Defence Reporter*, May 1989, p.36.
- 16 Of the 17 operational classes of ships and submarines in the Indian navy, 10 have been supplied by the Soviet Union.
- 17 As evidenced by India's purchase of German submarines, Polish landing craft and British carriers and aircraft, agreement with France over a new aircraft carrier, and even recent overtures to the United States.

India's military build-up and maritime expansion, therefore, should not be seen as simply a consequence of the unrestricted output of India's indigenous production capabilities. India may well have production-line techniques for vehicles, small arms and ammunition, but the decision to build major weapons platforms is clearly a political one. The naval build-up is not the end product of a *laissez-faire* arms industry.

Shipbuilding Facilities

Similarly, it should not be held that warships are being built primarily to provide employment and continuity of technological expertise in India's shipyards. The location and capacity of the various dockyards is shown at Table 5.2 (overleaf).

Many of the shipyards are being modernised and extended, in part to handle the recent surge in naval construction. Nevertheless, most major shipbuilding projects have experienced schedule slippages of up to several years, due not only to management and technical problems, but also because of the shortage of trained specialists. It would, therefore, be spurious to suggest that the risk of idle shipyards is a reason behind India's maritime expansion.

Table 5.2. Location and capacity of India's naval dockyards

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Capacity</u>
Mazagon Dock Ltd	Bombay	up to 27,000 DWT (dead weight tonnage) including passenger ships, tankers, floating docks and drilling platforms
Goa Shipyard Ltd	Goa	barges, trawlers and landing craft
Garden Reach Ship-Builders and Engineers Ltd	Calcutta	up to 28,000 DWT including bulk carriers, ocean-going merchant ships, dredges and harbour craft
Hindustan Shipyard Ltd	Vishakhapatnam	up to 21,500 DWT (can build 3 per year)
Cochin Shipyard	Cochin	up to 75,000 DWT (can build one bulk carrier per year but increasing to 2)

Source: R.N. Misra, *Indian Ocean and India's Security*, Mittal, New Delhi, 1986, pp. 60-1.

The Construction Of New Bases

One of the significant factors that militates against the whole idea of institutionalised momentum as an explanation is that since 1985, India has commenced work on, or has announced plans for, the development of five new major bases. In its Western Fleet region, with its headquarters at Bombay and a base already at Goa, India plans to build two new major bases. One is

to be built near Karwar on the west coast, in a 25-year project (Project SEABIRD) costed at US\$2 billion, and one at Lakshadweep in the Laccadive Islands. 18

In the Eastern Fleet region, with its headquarters at Vishakhapatnam and a base at Calcutta, India has commenced work on the upgrade of a large naval base at Port Blair in the Andaman Islands. 19 In its Southern Fleet region, with its headquarters at Cochin, India began construction in 1984 of a very-low-frequency communications network at Vijaynarayanam in Tamil Nadu, for communications to and the detection of submarines operating in the Indian Ocean. 20 India recently announced plans to build a new all-weather naval air base at Arkonam, also in Tamil Nadu, for use by BEAR F and MAY maritime reconnaissance and ASW aircraft and scheduled to be operational by 1990s. 21

In summary, it is apparent that institutionalised momentum - and political, bureaucratic, technological and budgetary inertia - have been important factors in India's maritime build-up. These factors have certainly contributed in the past to maritime expansion and some, more than others, will continue to do so. The point perhaps to be made is that institutionalised momentum is not the single-cause

18 The Karwar project involves the Australian firm REDECON and construction is due to start in the mid 1990s: *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 4/3/89, p. 352.

19 See O. Marwah, 'India's Strategic Perspectives on the Indian Ocean' in W.L. Dowdy and R.B. Trood (eds.), *The Indian Ocean: Perspectives on a Strategic Arena*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1985, p. 313.

20 Marwah, *The Indian Ocean*, p. 314.

21 *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 26/11/88, p. 1319.

explanation for India's current and planned strategic capabilities.

What Does India Want?

Having examined in previous chapters the explanations typically advanced for India's foreign policy, one can turn to the view-point that India is a power in its own right.

According to this view, India is a power in its own right. It is a power because of its size, its population, its economic growth, its military capabilities, and its political influence. India is a power because it is a country that has the potential to become a great power. It is a power because it is a country that has the potential to become a great power. It is a power because it is a country that has the potential to become a great power.

India is certainly aware that China has achieved

This case argument was put by H. Mahabadi in his paper "From Ganges to Shanghai", presented at the "Australia and the Indian Ocean Region" conference organized by the Centre for Indian Ocean Regional Studies (CIORS), Curtin University of Technology, Perth in March 1988.

India's leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement has also been eroded in part because of its position on Afghanistan, in part because of its perceived lack of solidarity with South Asian nations.

However, it can also be argued that large armed forces and a sophisticated nuclear capability are necessary for India to maintain its status as a great power. It is only with a major military and nuclear capability that India can ensure its security and its status as a great power.

CHAPTER 6 - IS IT SIMPLY THAT INDIA WANTS MORE STATUS?

What Does India Want?

Having examined in previous chapters the explanations typically advanced by India, one can turn to the view-point that India simply wants power for power's sake. 1

According to this view, India seeks to compensate militarily for the loss of status suffered since the rapid economic development of Japan and the other newly-industrialised countries left India and the rest of the developing world behind.² The argument is that India aspires to great power status and to be given its 'rightful' place in world affairs, as befits its size and population, its political stability, its economic and industrial strength, and its military power. 3

India is certainly annoyed that China has achieved

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- 1 This same argument was put by M. McKinley in his paper 'From Dante to Shannon', presented at the 'Australia and the Indian Ocean Seminar', organised by the Centre for Indian Ocean Regional Studies (CIORS), Curtin University of Technology, Perth in March 1988.
 - 2 India's leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement has also been eroded, in part because of its position on Afghanistan, in part because of its perceived belligerence in South Asian affairs.
 - 3 However, it can also be argued that large armed forces do not necessarily provide any operational use in either defence or diplomacy. There is not - according to this viewpoint - any necessary link between a powerful defence force and status. It is only when a major power is prepared to exercise its options to use force that it gains status.

global status with apparently much less effort. 4 India measures itself against China, using not just military yardsticks, but in all aspects of national achievement. Probably galling also is that both the Soviet Union and the United States actively court China - but tend to ignore India - and that China has a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. Although the view is not often expressed publicly, India obviously feels that its own size and achievements should entitle it to similar attention and status. 5

Somewhat surprisingly, the explication of this rationale has been a product of the West; rarely has it been propounded by Indian officials or commentators. Yet is it wrong for India to seek a more active and dominant place in world affairs? Indeed, does India not deserve to be taken more seriously than many in the West would perhaps like? Any objective assessment of these questions would seem to find in India's favour.

The obvious question is why India has been so reticent in declaring that it wants more status. One explanation is that Indians are basically modest people and would not approve of an active assertion of India's aspirations on the world stage. Given New Delhi's public 'crowing' over the recent test-launch of its ballistic missiles, however, this explanation does not seem particularly credible.

4 Comment by Dr R. Subramaniam to defence officials in Canberra in May 1989.

5 For a country attempting to be seen on a par with China, nothing infuriates India more than being compared with Pakistan: R. Kaul, 'Strategic Developments in Indian Ocean' in D.D. Khanna (ed.), *Strategic Environment in South Asia during the 1980s*, Naya Prokash, Calcutta, 1979, p. 101.

Another explanation, certainly more plausible, is that India does not want to unsettle its neighbours, by publicly announcing its pursuit of regional hegemony. Yet even this explanation is not particularly convincing, for India has traditionally paid little heed - at least until recently - to the feelings of its neighbours. 6

The more likely explanation seems to be that India has refrained from voicing its pretensions to great power because such declared aspirations would amount to an admission that India is currently somewhere well short of the mark. India is an intensely proud country; its leaders are unlikely ever to admit publicly that India needs a powerful navy to prove its place in the world - their logic would be that India has a powerful navy because it is a major power, as evidenced by its population, geographic size and economic importance.

The Historical Analogy

Even though India would perhaps never admit to the great power explanation, it has tried other means to project itself on to the world stage. One reasonably subdued, but nevertheless persistent approach, has been the 'historical analogy'.

This stems primarily from the influence of K. Panikkar and, in particular, his monograph *India and the Indian Ocean*. 7 Panikkar's book is a reference text at Indian defence colleges,

6 India's recent withdrawal from the Maldives, and its announced intention to withdraw from Sri Lanka, are driven in part by a desire to improve its image in the region.

7 Allen and Unwin, London, 2nd Edition, 1951. The first edition was published in 1946.

and numerous recent statements by Rajiv Gandhi - such as "it was our neglect of our naval defences that led to the colonial era" and "we are determined never again to lose control over the approaches to India from the sea" - are almost verbatim extracts from Panikkar.

Panikkar's thesis is that a study of India's history will show that "any power which has mastery of the sea ... can hold the Empire of India, monopolize her trade and exploit her unlimited resources". 8 He maintains that the Hindu theory behind India's historic greatness was "[the] active assertion of right if necessary through the force of arms". 9

Rajiv Gandhi made frequent reference to the historical might of India when rationalising India's current aspirations. He seemed particularly mindful of Panikkar's assertion that "India never lost her independence till she lost the command of the sea in the first decade of the 16th century".10

Other prominent defence officials and commentators seem similarly influenced by the supposed lessons of history. Kohli notes that "early Indian maritime activity dates back to over 3000 years". 11 Misra finds even earlier linkages, noting that in the ancient Sanskrit scripture *Vishnu Puran*, the goddess of wealth Laxmi emerged from the sea. 12 Kohli is also quick to point out

8 Panikkar, *India and the Indian Ocean*, p. 84.

9 Panikkar, *India and the Indian Ocean*, p. 16.

10 Panikkar, *India and the Indian Ocean*, p. 7.

11 S.N. Kohli, *Sea Power and the Indian Ocean*, McGraw-Hill, New Delhi, 1978, p. 3.

12 R.N. Misra, *Indian Ocean and India's Security*, Mittal, Delhi, 1986, Preface, p. x.

that even in early Indian history, India used its power not to subjugate, "but to promote trade and religious and cultural intercourse". 13

Cynics, though, would claim that status in past ages is no justification for contemporary aspirations. The historical argument is also based on certain inaccuracies. It was primarily the Moghuls of the south of India who were the seafarers, not the Hindus of the north. 14 In fact, according to the beliefs of Hinduism (especially after 1195 AD), to cross the ocean - or even the waters of the Indus or Ganges - is to 'break caste' - a matter conveniently overlooked by Gandhi and proponents of the historical analogy.

Nevertheless, it was probably a useful domestic exercise for Gandhi to remind his constituency of their past, and to infer that such great power is possible again in the future. The lessons of history, however, are not a credible rationale to offer the international community as justification for India's maritime expansion, or for India to be taken more seriously as a global actor.

The Indian Ocean Zone Of Peace

India has also tried to improve its status through proponency of the Indian Ocean Zone of Peace (IOZOP). The proposal was first put by Sri Lanka in 1971, but India has been

13 Kohli, *Sea Power*, P. 4.

14 In the 5th and 6th centuries AD, Hindus in the eastern region of India were reknowned seafarers.

its strongest backer. In its current form, the proposal aims to restrict the presence of extra-regional powers, both by discouraging naval deployments and banning the military bases of external powers in the region. Still, India's desire to exclude external powers barely conceals its objective of limiting any presence that competes with its own.

Yet the IOZOP is largely a product from another era, and the attitudes of several littoral states have changed considerably since 1971. Some derive much benefit from external aid and from hosting 'foreign' bases and, for some, the presence of external powers in the Indian Ocean is a useful balance against domination by stronger regional neighbours. 15

It seems, therefore, that New Delhi's advocacy of IOZOP may have been counter-productive, with a number of the littoral states presumably now suspecting that the corollary of reduced external presence is increased Indian influence.

Nuclear Weapons And Ballistic Missiles

Since the early 1970s, India has also sought to improve its global status by the acquisition of high-technology weaponry. In some Indian eyes, China's position on the world stage is due in no small part to the fact that it possesses both nuclear weapons

and the missiles to carry them. If India acquired similar capabilities, according to this view, would not it be accorded similar respect?

The difficulty for India has been that the possession of such clearly offensive weapons would sit uneasily with the historical experience of the independence movement - the Gandhian concept of non-violence. Indian officials usually characterise their country as surrounded on all sides by potential aggressors, while India's might is portrayed in purely defensive terms - this preserves the image of India as a peaceful country with no offensive intentions.

India's detonation of a nuclear device in 1974, for example, is still referred to by New Delhi as a 'peaceful nuclear explosion'. Along similar lines, India's recent test-firing of the medium-range AGNI missile has assertively been presented as a 'technology demonstration', rather than evidencing any offensive - or even potentially offensive - capability. 15

Increasingly, though, as India's nuclear and ballistic missile programs have advanced, it has become more difficult for New Delhi to continue to maintain the 'peaceful purposes' facade. India now publicly admits that it could develop nuclear weapons at short notice, and recent test-firings of AGNI and PRITHVI missiles indicate that the ballistic missile program is well advanced, albeit armed only with conventional warheads.

Certainly in the case of India's missile program, New

Delhi's main reason for development seems to be related to prestige; its long-term rivalry with China is a secondary motivation. India's nuclear program is also a matter of prestige, but the catalyst for overt production would be further development by Pakistan of its nuclear program.

Nevertheless, India still has difficulties in rationalising, both domestically and to the region, why it is acquiring these types of weapons. Indian explanations waver between talk of peaceful research and demonstrations of technology, and the need to counter the threat of like weapons in Pakistan and China. India may well only want nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles to enhance its global status; the problem for New Delhi is to allay regional concerns that such weapons are not a destabilising influence.

In summary, the fact that India wants more status does not seem unreasonable or exceptionable. Having one seventh of the world's population and occupying a huge land mass, in itself entitles India to an important position in world affairs. The issue seems to be that India has yet to come to grips with rationalising its aspirations of status, or deciding how best to achieve the status it desires.

CHAPTER 7 - OUTLOOK

The Military Trappings Of Power

At least in the eyes of a number of its neighbours, India has sought to promote its image through military power. This perception is fuelled by the comments of some influential Indian commentators, who argue that the deliberate development of military power is the only option India has - at least initially - "to count in the international system as a participant in global decision-making". ¹

India certainly has taken the lack of US criticism of its action in Sri Lanka and the Maldives to imply acknowledgement by the United States that India is the dominant power in South Asia - if not the Indian Ocean - and that the use of force is a legitimate means of achieving its goals. The recent US military action against Panama would reinforce this view.

Increasingly, though, it is evident that India is mindful of the accusation that it has chosen to rely almost exclusively on military power to establish its credentials as a major power. At a recent Indo-US seminar in the United States, for example, India's Ambassador to the United States devoted almost his entire introductory paper to a refutation of such

1 Once India has achieved equality status in the international system - according to this view - "the military power factor will become increasingly irrelevant": K. Subrahmanyam, *Indian Security Perspectives*, ABC Publishing House, New Delhi, 1982, Preface p. xi.

criticism. 2 According to Ambassador Bajpoi, India recognises that "the exercise of military capabilities [is] not an end in itself, but ... a component [of national security]". 3

Bajpoi did concede, however, that India has only belatedly come to an understanding of the role of military power in securing national security interests. 4 Bajpoi inferred that it has taken India some years to realise - as the Soviet Union has clearly found over the last decade or so - that foreign policy objectives cannot usually be achieved by military means alone. India has presumably also come to the realisation that an over-reliance on military power has had important implications for its foreign policy dealings and strategic relationships with others.

Relations Within The Region

India has long maintained, somewhat condescendingly, that its neighbours should realise that Indian military power contributes to their security and stability. 5 If neighbours view India with suspicion and fear then, according to New Delhi, their understanding of the role of great powers in history has been distorted by Western propaganda. 6 Nevertheless, many of

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- 2 See Ambassador K.S. Bajpoi, 'India's Security Perceptions', a paper delivered at the American National University in September 1989.
 - 3 Bajpoi, pp. 2-3.
 - 4 Bajpoi, p. 1. Bajpoi claimed that while India had been wrestling with the transition from the Gandhian concepts of non-violence to the cold-war realities of 'power-politics' in international affairs, the superpowers had changed the rules of the game.
 - 5 See, for example, Misra, *Indian Ocean*, p. 38.
 - 6 See Subrahmanyam, *Indian Security Perspectives*, p. v and Misra, *Indian Ocean*, p. 38.

India's neighbours are suspicious of New Delhi's long-term aspirations, and do not relish the thought of a 'big brother' watching over them. Of more concern to them is the fear that they may be powerless to prevent India 'helping out' in times of internal crisis.

Certainly as India has expanded its military capabilities, it has acquired greater ability to intervene in the region. Ten years ago, for example, India probably could not have intervened in the Maldives. Indeed, some would argue that India was constrained from direct intervention in Fiji only by its strategic difficulties in getting there. 7

Moreover, if and when India does intervene - as in Sri Lanka and the Maldives - some fear that India may decide to stay on, effectively taking over under the pretext of a continuing need for its presence. The fact that India has now withdrawn from the Maldives and is planning to be out of Sri Lanka by early 1990 is probably a reflection, in part, of India's growing awareness of the concern that its military build-up is causing to the region. 8

The associated and practically more serious consequence is that India's military build-up encourages a regional arms race. While the weaker littoral states may be forced into submission, realising they can never hope to match India, the more powerful states - and Pakistan in particular - will try to defy

7. Alluded to by Goh Chok Tong, then Singapore's First Deputy Prime Minister in *The Economist*, 3 March 1990, p. 26.

8 It can, of course, be argued that "the attention that India's neighbours are paying to the build-up is precisely the sort of dividend New Delhi is seeking to gain": R. Munro, 'Superpower Rivalry', *Time* (Asian edition), 3/4/89.

Indian hegemony. The concern for regional stability is that these other states, realising the inequality of the competition, may seek the assistance of external powers, or at least promote alliances within the region.

Already, for example, there is some suggestion of an emerging strategic relationship between China, Pakistan and Bangladesh - albeit probably confined, at this stage, to the supply of Chinese military equipment to India's neighbours. The paradox is that the very deterrence that India hopes to achieve may well result in an action-reaction arms spiral that makes India no more secure than before.

Explaining India's Motives

Part of the problem is that India has failed to explain to the region exactly what it is trying to achieve by its maritime expansion. 9 India's neighbours need to be reassured that India "will use its power with restraint and not for its own sake". 10 Rationalising the build-up to different audiences in terms of perceived threats posed by India's neighbours does little to engender a sense of security or stability within the region. Moreover, India cannot continue to "stuff one's ears against what the neighbourhood is saying in order to pretend that it is saying nothing critical". 11

9 At the 'Australia and the Indian Ocean' seminar in Perth in March 1988, Professor Subrahmanyam admitted that "India has been remiss in not explaining the reasons for its naval expansion".

10 M. McKinley, 'Why India is set to become a great power', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11/2/89, p. 19.

11 S.K. Darra-Ray, 'The Indian Ocean - II', in *The Statesman*, 5/3/89.

Part of the problem too is that India itself does not seem to know where it is going. Indeed, one Indian commentator has claimed that Defence Minister Beazley "has provided a more forthright view of Indian naval strategy than India can itself provide" - referring to Beazley's inauguration address at the Centre for Indian Ocean Regional Studies seminar in Perth in March 1988. 12

It is also hardly a satisfactory explanation for India to assert - as did Ambassador Bajpoi at the Indo-US seminar - that the answer lies simply in a general assessment of India's international role and responsibilities. 13 Nor is it particularly useful for Bajpoi to assert that "the question answers itself", and that Western officials and commentators ought to have a better understanding of India's strategic perspectives. 14

The reality is that India has no equivalent to Australia's white papers on defence, and there is practically no attempt made to debate the issues either in parliament or in public forums. Defence planning seems to be left almost entirely to the military - "there are no inputs from think-tanks, no discussion, and everything is left to the generals". 15

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- 12 M. Joshi, 'Indian Defence and Australia' in *The Hindu*, 17/6/89.
 - 13 Bajpoi, 'India's Security Perceptions', pp. 3-4.
 - 14 Bajpoi, 'India's Security Perceptions', p. 4.
 - 15 S. Gupta and P. Thakurta, 'Heading for a Crisis', *India Today*, 28/2/89, p. 50.

The Prospects Under V.P. Singh

Congress (I)'s electoral defeat may be only a temporary set-back for Rajiv Gandhi, particularly given that the National Front government of V.P. Singh depends for its survival on the Hindu-fundamentalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Communist Party of India. Nevertheless, V.P. Singh now has the opportunity to improve India's relations with its neighbours, and to rein in India's program of maritime expansion.

The difficulties will be that Singh's government is less stable, weaker and less able than was Gandhi's to make tough decisions. It will probably be pre-occupied with consolidating its power base, and foreign policy issues will be afforded a low priority. Still, when he was in opposition, Singh claimed that India's military build-up was no longer sustainable and that defence expenditure was not compatible with India's economic growth objectives. As a former defence and finance minister, Singh is well aware of the discrepancy between India's military aspirations and its capacity to pay. Faced with economic priorities in government, Singh may decide to cut military manpower or cancel major equipment programs.

More likely, though, is that Singh's new government will be tempted to follow the line of least resistance and maintain existing programs - particularly given that a high level of military spending tends to have bipartisan support in India, and that the BJP talks constantly of a revitalised and strong India. The institutionalised momentum of weapons programs also means that it will be easier to maintain existing programs than force a change. Budgetary constraints, though, should mean that no new

major defence programs are initiated.

The National Front government is committed to improving India's relations with its neighbours, and will probably adopt a less overbearing approach in defence and foreign policy than Congress (I). Domestically, there is some evidence to suggest that quite a few of India's elite would prefer that India not attempt to develop a role of its own in international affairs. 16 There is no indication to date, however, that Singh's government is about to tackle the more fundamental issue of articulating India's strategic objectives, or encouraging public debate on India's place in the world.

Behind the bluff and smokescreen of New Delhi's rhetoric may well be a strongly-held consensus that India deserves to be taken more seriously by the international community, and that India wants to become a global actor. Yet until India clarifies its own thinking on the issues, develops a clear-cut agenda involving public discussion, and reconciles national actions with international perceptions, the rest of the world will rightly remain suspicious of India's maritime expansion. And India's neighbours and the region will rightly ask "what is India up to?".

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